

Groton Daily Independent

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Lana's Annals

**Lana
Greenfield
District 2
State
Representative**

Greetings from OUR capitol! Week one consisted of many preliminaries: official swearing in of officials, establishing committee times and rooms, and being assigned to Whip groups. A new experience for me was beginning my new appointment as Chair of our House Education Committee. My duties entail setting up daily bill hearing schedules and working with staff on proper posting times, thus informing testifiers when particular bills will be heard. In addition, I will be presiding over each meeting on M-W-F with the aid of my vice chair Rep. Glanzer, Huron and Legislative Research Staff. I am humbled that the House Speaker has placed his trust in me to fulfill these duties. As most of you know, I spent 37 years as a high school English teacher. I have been retired from this for over 8 years, and many changes have taken place since then. I will be relying on my educator friends

in our state to answer some unknowns as far as new education programs, student testing, surveys, paperwork loads, etc. Our committee consists of past school board members, a judge, a former college professor, farmers, parents with children in public and home school and other diversified personnel. I feel the group brings much valuable knowledge into the committee. Every bill will have a fair hearing. Our committee proceedings can be heard on the internet, as can all, on the legislative research site. They are taped for your listening convenience. The schedule of bills to be heard will be posted in advance on the site as well. I anticipate that we will see some legislation on a required high school civics class (half credit), continuation of personal finance classes, discussion of mental health issues present in all grades at our schools and what to do about them. I personally would like to see more volunteers in our schools, people who would add a little extra TLC at times due to personal struggles or tragedies which families or school personnel could be facing.

I also serve as a member of the Local Government committee. So far, we do not have any bills up for discussion, but I expect that will rapidly change by the time you read this.

Most of you heard or read about the addresses from Governor Noem, Chief Justice Gilbertson, and Tribal Chairman Bordeaux. All three of them expressed their concerns about meth and opioid addiction and how many societal problems and correctional costs center around this huge issue.

Each of the aforementioned speakers had other priorities as well they would like to see tackled in our state. Some mentioned by our Governor are these: improving state broadband, hunting habitat, and the need for our children to have good, stable homes. She expressed a devout sensitivity for those children who are waiting to be adopted into good homes and has vowed to have that become reality.

Our Chief Justice promoted mental evaluation expedience and proper treatment, setting up pilot programs in certain jails to reduce recidivism, and having more investigation of elder abuse occurring in South Dakota, particularly financial fraud. Tribal Leader Bordeaux expressed a desire to have better health care on the reservations and better educational opportunities. He desires to have greater economic development to get people working. He is committed having past treaties and promises honored.

All in all, it was a week of bringing our many new faces in government up to speed by also having meetings after session so there is increased awareness of departments and what each does within, of available resources to contact when needed, and establishing decorum. No day is ever the same. We once again started out on a low note of family deaths and illnesses involving our legislators and personnel. We have many people offering up daily prayers for us as elected officials. I would ask that you join (if you have not as of yet) in doing so as well. It is important to make the correct decisions for this state. We all have things we would wish to change or have put in place. In doing so, however, we need to think how this affects everyone, not just our private wants. How will a change in laws affect families, schools, businesses, and the overall values and climate of our state? Please consider these as you listen daily. By the way, our sessions are televised on SDPBS; please consult your local companies for viewing channel number. Most days we begin at 1 with the Senate immediately following.

Thank you to constituents and friends from back home who took time from their conferences to say "Hi" to me. We had Rural Water, Technology, and SDREA out there, just to name a few.

My contact is lane.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov or lane.greenfield@gmail.com or 605-635-6932 on weekends. I prefer e-mails for promptness. You may also call the House Chamber if you choose.

Until next week, may you be well and happy.

Rep. Lana Greenfield

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Skating Rink Hours

Open Monday - Thursday: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sunday: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Sunday, January 13, 2019

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena (Grades JK-8 2pm - 4pm; Grades 6-12 4pm - 6pm)


Monday, January 14, 2019

6:30pm: Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Langford @ Langford High School

7:00pm- 9:00pm: School Board Meeting, Groton Area High School

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



*81st Annual
Carnival of Silver Skates*

Sunday, January 27th—2:00 and 6:30
Groton Ice Rink—West Side of Groton, SD

Join us for a fun “Road Trip”!

Admission: 13 & older—\$3.00 / 6-12—\$2.00

Parking: Provided around the rink and on the ice or cozy up on the bleachers
(Ice parking begins at 10 am, then again at 4:30 pm)

**Check us out on Facebook at “Silver Skates”

Homecare Services Caregivers

Flexible, part time positions available in the Groton area. Home Care Services is looking for friendly dependable people to provide care and companionship for elderly and disabled people in their homes. You will be assisting our clients with personal care needs, meal preparations, light housekeeping, errands and other tasks. If you have a passion for helping others and need a flexible schedule, please call our office at (605) 225-1076 or 1-800-899-2578. (1218.0101)

Front Porch Manager Wanted

Immediate opening for Restaurant General Manager at The Front Porch Bar & Grill in Langford SD. Hiring bonus available! Salary DOE. Must be 21 years old. Contact Suzie Easthouse at (605) 493-6570 or email resume by to langfordfrontporch@venture-comm.net. (1227.0111)

Men's basketball leaves Bemidji State in the dust

Aberdeen, S.D. – What looked to be an evenly matched game through the first half, turned into a 20-point victory for the Northern State men's basketball team. The Wolves defeated Bemidji State on Saturday evening, 73-53 after holding the Beavers to just 20 points in the second half. Northern improves to 13-3 overall and 9-1 in the NSIC following the win.

A total of 12 Wolves saw the floor in the win, as Northern shot 46.3 percent from the floor, 38.5 percent from the 3-point line, and 85.7 percent from the foul line. They stuck with their bread and butter, out-rebounding the Beavers 37-32 and combined for a game high ten assists, six blocks, and seven steals.

Northern tallied 34 points in the paint, 35 points off the bench, 15 points off turnovers, six second chance points, and one bucket off a fast break. They drained five from beyond the arc, and held their largest lead of the game, 22 points, with 1:23 left in regulation.

Ian Smith led the team with a season high 23 points, knocking down 7-of-12 from the floor and 8-of-8 from the foul line. The senior added four rebounds, two assists, and one steal. Mason Stark followed leading the team off the bench as the only other Wolf in double figures. The redshirt freshman recorded 12 points, two rebounds, one assist, and one steal.

Cole Dahl and Parker Fox each tallied eight points apiece, with Fox also leading the team with eight rebounds. Dahl shot a swift 1.000 percent from the floor with two made 3-pointers, and added two rebounds and one block. Fox continued to fly high for the Wolves with a team high two blocks in the win, as well as a monster dunk which sent the two teams into the locker room at halftime.

Jordan Belka saw increased minutes for the Wolves, notching five points, two rebounds, one block, and one steal off the bench. He was followed by Bo Fries, Gabe King, and Justin Decker with four points apiece. Fries was second on the team with seven rebounds, while King and Decker each grabbed four.

Andrew Kallman led the Wolves with three assists and two steals in the win. The sophomore also added three points. Roko Dominovic was the final scorer for the Wolves with two points, one rebound, and one steal in the final minute of action.

The Wolves will continue their home stand next weekend versus Augustana and Wayne State. Tip-off is set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday versus the Vikings and 6 p.m. on Saturday against the Wildcats.

Wolves pick up the weekend sweep with win over Bemidji State Saturday

Aberdeen, S.D. – Northern State finished the weekend sweep and also picked up a regular season sweep over Bemidji State Saturday afternoon by a final of 56-47. With the win, the Wolves reach the .500 mark at 8-8 and 5-5 in NSIC play.

Wolves started the game hot on an 8-0 run over the first three minutes of the game. Bemidji State would get back into the game and trailed the Wolves by three after one quarter of play. Both teams showed mini runs in the second quarter but the Wolves out-scored the Beavers 10-9 and took a four-point lead into the intermission. Wolves shot 48.0 percent from the field in the first half, seven assists on 12 made field, and out-rebounded the Beavers 18-12.

Wolves gave up three points in the quarter, as the Wolves extended the lead 13 heading into the final quarter. Bemidji State out-scored the Wolves 16-20 in the fourth quarter as the Wolves defeated the Beavers 56-47. Wolves in the game, shot 44.4 percent from the field, made 16 free throws, 18 points in the paint, and 18 points off turnovers.

Brianna Kusler tallied her seventh double-double of the season with 11 points, 12 rebounds, two assists, and one steal. Alayna Johnson led the Wolves in scoring with 12 points, three rebounds, and two assists. Anika Fredrick was the last player for the Wolves in double figures with 10 points, six rebounds, and one assist. Jessi Marti picked up eight points in the win with four rebounds, three steals, and one assist.

Lexi Wadsworth was the last starter for the Wolves, scoring four points, seven rebounds, one assist, and two steals. Zoe Hardwick led the Wolves in scoring on the bench with seven points. Brooke Luitjens tallied three points, two steals, and one assist off the bench. Tori Mekash recorded one point and three rebounds in the win. Joie Spier recorded three rebounds off the bench.

Wolves are back in action next Friday as the Wolves host Augustana Friday night at 5:30 p.m. and Saturday afternoon at 4 p.m. against Wayne State.

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Stats from Little Wound Game Final Score: Little Wound 85, Groton Area 72

Player	No.	2Pt	2PtA	2Pt%	3Pt	3PtA	3Pt%	FG	FGA	FG%	EFG%	FT	FTA	FT %	Pts
DeHoet	42	7	8	87.5%	1	5	20.0%	8	13	61.5%	65.4%	0	0	0.0%	17
Diegel	55	6	10	60.0%	4	9	44.4%	10	19	52.6%	63.2%	1	1	100.0%	25
Doeden	3	6	10	60.0%	1	3	33.3%	7	13	53.8%	57.7%	0	0	0.0%	15
Guthmiller	11	0	0	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Jones	34	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Kroll	4	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Kurtz	20	0	5	0.0%	1	1	100.0%	1	6	16.7%	25.0%	8	11	72.7%	11
Larson	24	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Traphagen	50	1	1	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	1	100.0%	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Zak	12	1	1	100.0%	0	1	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Groton Varsity Totals		21	36	58.3%	7	21	33.3%	28	57	49.1%	55.3%	9	12	75.0%	72
Little Wound Totals		30	40	75.0%	5	22	22.7%	35	62	56.5%	60.5%	10	20	50.0%	85
Bear Killer IV	20	1	2	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Cross	22	6	7	85.7%	4	13	30.8%	10	20	50.0%	60.0%	1	5	20.0%	25
Janis	32	15	16	93.8%	0	1	0.0%	15	17	88.2%	88.2%	0	0	0.0%	30
Kills Back	4	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Lebeaux	10	1	4	25.0%	0	3	0.0%	1	7	14.3%	14.3%	5	7	71.4%	7
Little	12	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Martin III	2	5	8	62.5%	1	4	25.0%	6	12	50.0%	54.2%	3	5	60.0%	16
No Neck	30	1	2	50.0%	0	1	0.0%	1	3	33.3%	33.3%	0	0	0.0%	2
Tallman	54	1	1	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	1	100.0%	100.0%	1	3	33.3%	3
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0

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**SOUTH DAKOTA
NEWS WATCH**

Inform. Enlighten. Illuminate.

Economic fears follow Shopko store closures in S.D. small towns **By: Bart Pfankuch**

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit news organization. Find more in-depth reporting at www.sdnewswatch.org.

The pending closure of ShopKo department stores may have devastating effects on six South Dakota small towns that will suffer job losses, decreased access to basic necessities and reductions in sales-tax collections that could limit municipal services.

The announcement that the retail chain will close several stores has stunned city and chamber of commerce officials in Chamberlain, Custer, Dell Rapids, Redfield, Wagner and Webster who say their economies and residents will suffer from the closures. They say shoppers will soon have to drive up to an hour each way to buy home and living products, and they worry that opportunities for future growth of their towns could be hampered.

The Wisconsin-based retail chain said in December that as part of a restructuring strategy it will close more than three dozen ShopKo stores across the Midwest. The closures in South Dakota will take place in six towns under 4,000 in population that do not have another department store. Five of the towns are geographically isolated.

Analysts say the closures are being driven by the increased ease of online shopping and the growth of mega-stores like Walmart that combine a traditional department store with a full grocery. Furthermore, some experts say the explosive growth of discounters like Dollar Tree, Dollar General and Family Dollar – all of which operate in the South Dakota towns losing their ShopKos — have squeezed mid-sized retailers that cannot compete on price.

Officials from ShopKo did not respond to several phone and email messages from South Dakota News Watch. But in previous press statements, the chain that has 363 stores in 24 states said it chose locations for closure based on a review of “the long-term outlook on profitability, sales trends, and potential growth.” The chain announced four South Dakota closures in December and added Chamberlain and Custer to the list in early January.

In isolated rural areas of South Dakota, the pending closure of the ShopKo stores – all of which opened within the past four years – has exposed the fragility of small-town economies. The store closures are taking both an economic and emotional toll on residents, business owners and those who work to ensure a vibrant future for their communities.

“I was born and raised here and I have a passion about my community and small towns in general,” said Kelsey Doom, director of economic development for Wagner Area Growth. “But I’m starting to wonder, ‘How are we going to make it as a small town?’”

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Merchandise at the Shopko store in Wagner, S.D., is being liquidated in advance of a planned closure of the store in February. Wagner and other small towns that are losing Shopko are concerned about the economic fallout.

Major 'trickle-down' effect expected

The shifting nature of retail has led to store closings and financial concerns in both urban and rural areas of the country. Sioux Falls and Rapid City have been hit by the downfall of Sears, Herbergers and K-Mart, which is about to close its last South Dakota location in Rapid City.

Consumers in larger cities are protected by the diversity and depth of remaining retail offerings. However, the closure of a single business, particularly one with a wide variety of merchandise, can cause a ripple effect through the economy of a small town.

"It definitely hurts more than it would in a larger city," said Gianna Lantero, executive director of Grow Spink, an organization that pushes economic development in Spink County, of which Redfield is the county seat. "It's a huge deal when you have something like this close because it affects a lot of people and other parts of the community."

In the six South Dakota towns losing a ShopKo, the closures are causing concern on several levels.

Each closure will cost about 15 to 25 people their jobs in communities where skilled labor positions are plentiful but decent-paying retail positions are hard to come by.

The towns will each lose their only major retail outlet and access to the wide variety of clothing, toys, small appliances, food and other home goods typically sold by ShopKo. Though all six communities are home to dollar stores, residents in Chamberlain, Custer Redfield, Wagner and Webster will have to drive roughly an hour and those in Dell Rapids about 20 minutes to shop at a comparable retail outlet. The lack of access to retail goods may cause a hardship for some populations, particularly lower-income and elderly residents.

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"People don't want to travel all the way to Aberdeen, and some just can't," said Lantero. "We serve a good-sized elderly population in Redfield, and some don't drive but they knew they could shop for those goods right here in town."

Inconvenience, however, is only part of the problem.

The closures, officials say, could also inhibit future growth by limiting retail options that entice new residents and businesses that are critical to long-term economic stability in small towns. Having a large building sitting vacant at the entry point to their downtowns won't help encourage growth, either.

While overall the economy has been strong in Webster, a town of about 1,900 along U.S. 12 in Day County, losing a prominent, highly visible retail outlet is a significant setback.

"With our businesses, it all adds up to a well-rounded community, which attracts people to come here for a job, to move here or for an industry to locate here because the more you have, the better off you are," said Webster Mayor Mike Grosek. "It gives you an uneasy feeling, and it's a big downer when a corporation comes down and just says, 'Thanks for everything, but see you later.'"

The towns losing their stores also will see the evaporation of a sizable chunk of sales tax revenue that could affect municipal operations ranging from police and fire protection to upkeep of streets and parks.

"In all these small communities, we live and die on the sales tax," said Justin Weiland, city administrator of Dell Rapids in northern Minnehaha County. "You strip away some of that sales tax and you strip away the ability to pay for your police department or your park system or the street projects you planned for next year."

ShopKo cutting back in S.D.

Here is a look at the 20 ShopKo stores now operating in South Dakota; the stores in bold are scheduled to close in February. Hometown stores are smaller versions of the typical big-box ShopKo store and have reduced offerings.

Shopko, Aberdeen

ShopKo Hometown, Belle Fourche

ShopKo Hometown, Chamberlain

ShopKo Hometown, Custer

Shopko, Dell Rapids

ShopKo Hometown, Hot Springs

ShopKo Hometown, Madison

ShopKo Hometown, Milbank

ShopKo, Mitchell

ShopKo Hometown, Mobridge

ShopKo, Rapid City

ShopKo Hometown, Redfield

ShopKo, Sioux Falls (2 locations)

ShopKo Hometown, Sisseton

ShopKo Hometown, Sturgis

ShopKo Hometown, Wagner

ShopKo, Watertown

ShopKo, Webster

ShopKo Hometown, Winner

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Towns worked hard to land ShopKo stores

Officials and residents of Dell Rapids were surprised and disappointed that ShopKo had targeted the store in their community for closure.

The Shopko opened in a flourishing business plaza about 2.5 years ago on the northwest side of the city, said Weiland.

Sales at the store likely were hampered by an invasive 3-year road project that tore up Highway 115 in front of the store and between Dell Rapids and Interstate 29, Weiland said.

The ShopKo closure and the road construction project highlight the fragility of small-town economies across South Dakota and the country.

"It was a 3-year project that really disrupted the traffic pattern in the region," Weiland said. "All of our retailers on that corridor, the entrance to Dell Rapids, said the traffic problems really affected them."

Several small businesses saw a slowdown and the city experienced a corresponding decline in sales tax collections, Weiland said.

A down year for agriculture or another major industry can also hurt a local economy. With ongoing trade wars and losses due to tariffs, heavy rains that made harvesting difficult and low commodity prices, many rural South Dakota small towns took a hit in 2018.

Local officials and business leaders fear the ShopKo closures will have a significant economic ripple effect as patrons who now must leave town for clothes and other basic goods are likely to do more shopping in larger cities nearby.

In Wagner, a reservation town of about 1,600 people in Charles Mix County, losing ShopKo is likely to entice even more people to make the hour drive to Mitchell or Yankton to shop for basic necessities and more, said Doom.

She also worries that the town's dozen or so retailers, as well as its service providers and two grocers, will lose money when shoppers leave town. Doom said some residents are connecting on social media to car pool or plan for multiple purchases when a friend or relative announces they are heading to a bigger city to shop.

"It's going to be a huge trickle-down effect," said Doom, who also heads the Wagner Chamber of Commerce. "When they're at Walmart in Mitchell or Yankton, they're going to grab all their groceries and have dinner and spend money that they're not going to spend locally."

Mayor Grosek of Webster seems like someone who might see an upside to ShopKo closing since he runs the town's full-service grocery store, Mike's Jack and Jill. The loss of ShopKo, which sold some dry goods and frozen foods, could at first buoy some businesses in Webster, including his own.

But ultimately, the closure will hurt his store and others when people leave town to shop for home goods, Grosek said.

"It's nothing for individuals to hop in a car and drive 50 miles out and back," Grosek said. "They may get

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out of town for an outing, but more times than not they'll buy other things rather than get them here."

The towns where ShopKo is closing are also losing out on investments made to lure the stores to locate there.

In Wagner, Doom said she worked with a local landlord to get ShopKo a favorable lease on an existing building. The city also entered into a deal to give ShopKo a sales tax rebate of up to \$25,000 a year for five years, which saved the company about \$70,000 in sales taxes over the past three years, Doom said.

In Webster, the city and local economic development group ponied up \$50,000 in incentives to upgrade the building ShopKo inhabited, and in Dell Rapids a land swap between a private landowner and the local development corporation helped that city attract a ShopKo.

One town in North Dakota was able to save its ShopKo through the power of social media.

The day after ShopKo announced the pending closure of four ShopKo stores in North Dakota, including in Stanley, N.D., local bank branch manager Jenny Pummel-Gaaskjolen began an online petition to save the store. The petition drew nearly 1,600 signatures from in and around the town of about 1,500 people located 60 miles west of Minot.

About two weeks later, after the landlord of the ShopKo store agreed to reduce the rent and the petition drew regional media attention, ShopKo reversed course and announced the Stanley store would remain open.

"It really fills a basic need for us," Pummel-Gaaskjolen, a South Dakota native, said of the ShopKo store. "Just the impact to the community; it would be hard to attract new people to town without it, and it's hard to keep people here as it is."

"It's going to be a huge trickle-down effect. When they're at Walmart in Mitchell or Yankton, they're going to grab all their groceries and have dinner and spend money that they're not going to spend locally."

- Kelsey Doom, director of economic development for Wagner Area Growth.

Expert sees closings as opportunities

Officials in the six South Dakota towns losing a ShopKo all expressed some optimism that their local economies will survive and may even thrive if something new and exciting can replace the shuttered stores.

A positive, proactive approach to planning may help that process, said Rand Wergin, an associate professor of marketing in the business school at the University of South Dakota.

Wergin specializes in understanding small-town economies with a focus on how those municipalities

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can attract spending by both locals and visitors.

Two keys to retail success in isolated small towns, Wergin said, are to push hard for locals to spend locally but also for businesses and development officials to create an experience and an emotional connection to their town that makes it a destination for visitors.

Wergin said Sioux Falls has used its art walk and a diverse offering of unique shops and eateries to make its downtown a destination, just as Rapid City has used its Main Street Square and presidential statues to create a place where visitors will spend both time and money.

In an isolated small town like Wagner, Wergin said the community could focus intently on its connection to hunting and fishing opportunities along the nearby Missouri River and Lake Francis Case to create a mix of retail and dining options that capitalize on and cater to that population of visitors.

"It's either a threat or an opportunity for Wagner," Wergin said of the ShopKo closing. "If they do nothing, they could shrivel up and die. But it's a really interesting place because of its proximity to the lake and river, so they need to ask themselves, 'What can we do to brand that?'"

Wergin has created an economic index called the Small Town Retail Pull Factor, which uses state population and sales tax revenue data to determine if a town pulls in more revenue from locals and visitors than it loses to other nearby cities and towns. If everyone in a town shopped locally only, the factor would be 1.0. A town with a factor higher than 1.0 is luring more outside spending and a town with a factor below 1.0 is losing local revenue to other areas.

Wagner, for example, is losing sales to outside communities and has a factor of .91, while Webster appears to be more of a regional hub and has a positive pull factor of 1.84.

For comparison, the small town of Lake Andes loses significant local spending and has a pull factor of only .29, and similarly Dell Rapids has a pull factor of .73 because shoppers have the easy option to head into Sioux Falls, Wergin said.

To improve its economy and fight the trend of rural economic shrinkage, Wergin said a small town should focus on making itself well-known for something or play up unique shops or restaurants that set it apart from other towns.

"We're seeing that, in general, the retail situation is deteriorating in small towns; it's not an alarm, it's something we've been seeing for a long time," Wergin said. "But there's still room for small-town retailers to be successful if they can offer the experiences their customers want."

As the ShopKo liquidation sales go on, economic officials in South Dakota are working feverishly to find replacement businesses to inhabit the soon-to-be-vacant buildings before they become worn.

In Wagner, Doom said she is pitching an idea to possibly divide up the 22,000 square-foot ShopKo building and turn it into an event hall, multi-use retail plaza or hub for offices. Doom said she would love to attract a family-oriented enterprise such as a laser tag facility to the site.

Grosek said he and others in Webster are trying to lure a new, similar retailer to the ShopKo site to replace the merchandise, convenience and jobs that will be lost.

"We're not just letting this thing close up and do nothing about it," Grosek said. "We're making some calls and knocking on doors to see if there's something comparable that we can get in there."

About Bart Pfankuch

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal. Bart has spent almost 30 years as a reporter and editor.

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Today in Weather History

January 13, 1913: The temperature at Rapid City, South Dakota, rose sixty-four degrees in just fourteen hours.

January 13, 1916: Extreme cold affected central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota on January 13th, 1916. Record low temperatures were set at Kennebec, Timber Lake, Wheaton, and Watertown. Timber lake recorded a low temperature of 37 degrees below zero, Wheaton fell to 38 degrees below zero, Kennebec recorded a low of 39 degrees below zero, with 40 degrees below zero recorded at Watertown on this day in 1916. Aberdeen and Mobridge recorded 38 degrees below zero and 36 degrees below zero, respectively.

January 13, 2009: After a clipper system dropped from 1 to 4 inches of snow on the 13th, Arctic air and blustery north winds pushed into the area. The coldest air and the lowest wind chills of the season spread across much of central and northeast South Dakota. Wind chills fell to 35 to 50 degrees below zero late in the evening of the 13th and remained through the 14th and into the mid-morning hours of the 15th. Across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota, wind chills were as low as 60 degrees below zero by the morning of the 15th. Many vehicles did not start because of the extreme cold, and several schools had delayed starts. The Arctic high-pressure area settled in on the morning of the 15th bringing the coldest temperatures to the region in many years. The combination of a fresh and deep snowpack, clear skies, and light winds allowed temperatures to fall to record levels at many locations on the 15th. Daytime highs remained well below zero across the area. This was one of the coldest days that most areas experienced since the early 1970s. The records were broken by 1 to as much as 7 degrees. Some of the record lows included, -30 degrees at Kennebec; -31 degrees at Sisseton; -32 degrees at Milbank; -33 degrees at Mobridge; -35 degrees at Andover and near Summit; -38 degrees at Eureka; -39 degrees 8 miles north of Columbia and Castlewood; -42 degrees at Aberdeen; and -47 degrees at Pollock. Some near-record low temperatures included, -24 degrees at Pierre; -29 degrees at Redfield and Victor; -32 degrees at Roscoe; and -34 degrees at Watertown. In Aberdeen, the low temperature of -42 degrees tied the third coldest temperature ever recorded.

1862: Known as the Great Flood of 1862, a series of storms from December 1861 to January 1862 produced the largest flood in the recorded history of Oregon, Nevada, and California. Estimated property damage in California alone was \$10 million in 1862 dollars. More than 200,000 head of cattle lost their lives. The State of California went bankrupt, and the economy evolved from ranching to farm based. The same areas are expected to be flooded again if another ARkStorm (USGS name) was to impact California, which is predicted to cause over \$750 billion (2011 USD), making it more disastrous than California's long-overdue major earthquake. California is currently overdue for a Megastorm, and such an event would have severe impacts on the entire U.S. economy. [Click HERE for more information.](#)

1950: January 1950 was one of the worst winter months on record for Seattle, Washington, and surrounding areas. By the end of the month, Seattle measured 57.2 inches of snow, the most snowfall in any month since records began in 1894. Normal January snowfall is 1.4 inches. On this day, a crippling blizzard produced 40 to 50 mph winds and an astounding 20 inches. [Click HERE for more information, along with newspaper links, from KomoNews.](#) [Click HERE for newspaper articles from the Bellingham Herald.](#)

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Today



Mostly Cloudy

High: 27 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy
then Patchy
Fog

Low: 14 °F

Monday



Patchy Fog
then Mostly
Cloudy

High: 25 °F

Monday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

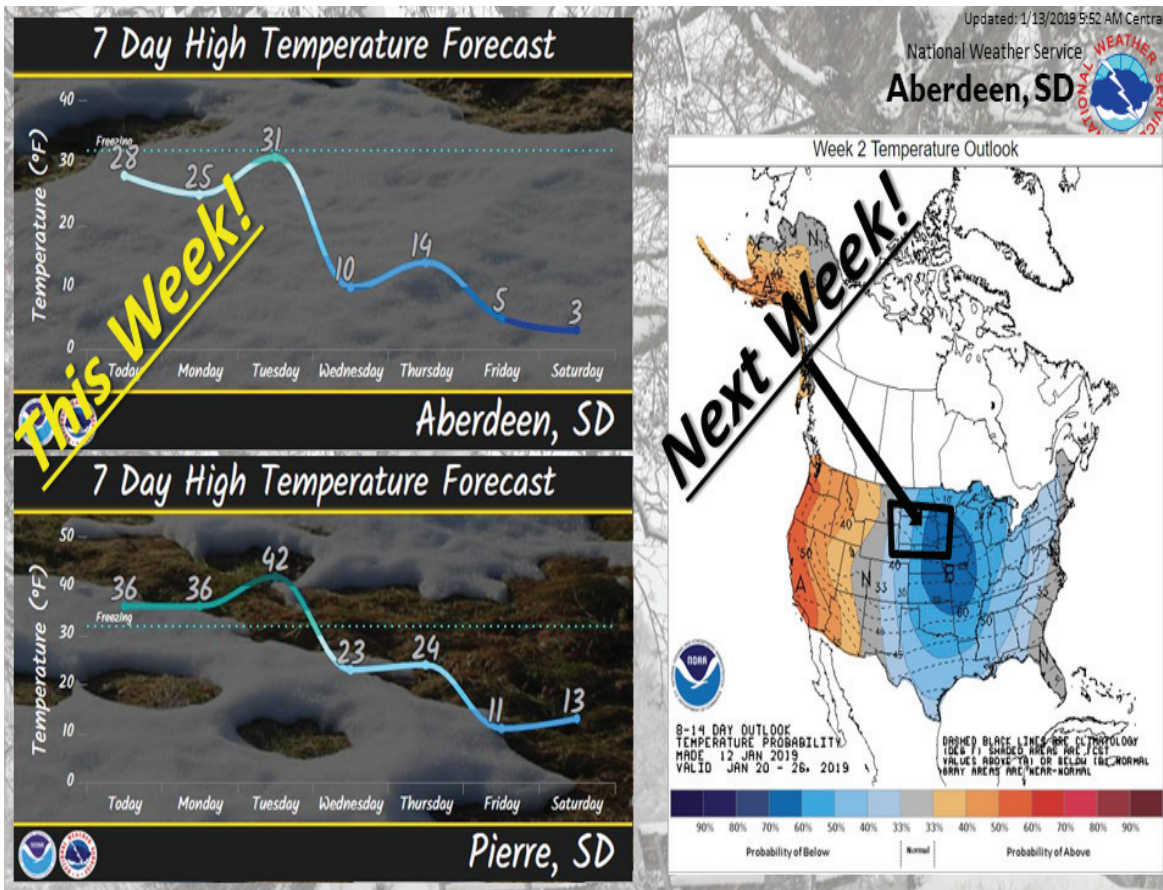
Low: 13 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 30 °F



Published on: 01/13/2019 at 5:57AM

Cloudy today, with areas of dense fog across parts of central and north central South Dakota. The biggest weather story right now, though, is how cold it's going to get by the end of the week, and potentially, much of next week!

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 22 °F at 7:39 PM

Low Outside Temp: 17 °F at 2:00 AM

High Gust: 16 mph at 3:02 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 56° in 1987

Record Low: -40° in 1912

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.21

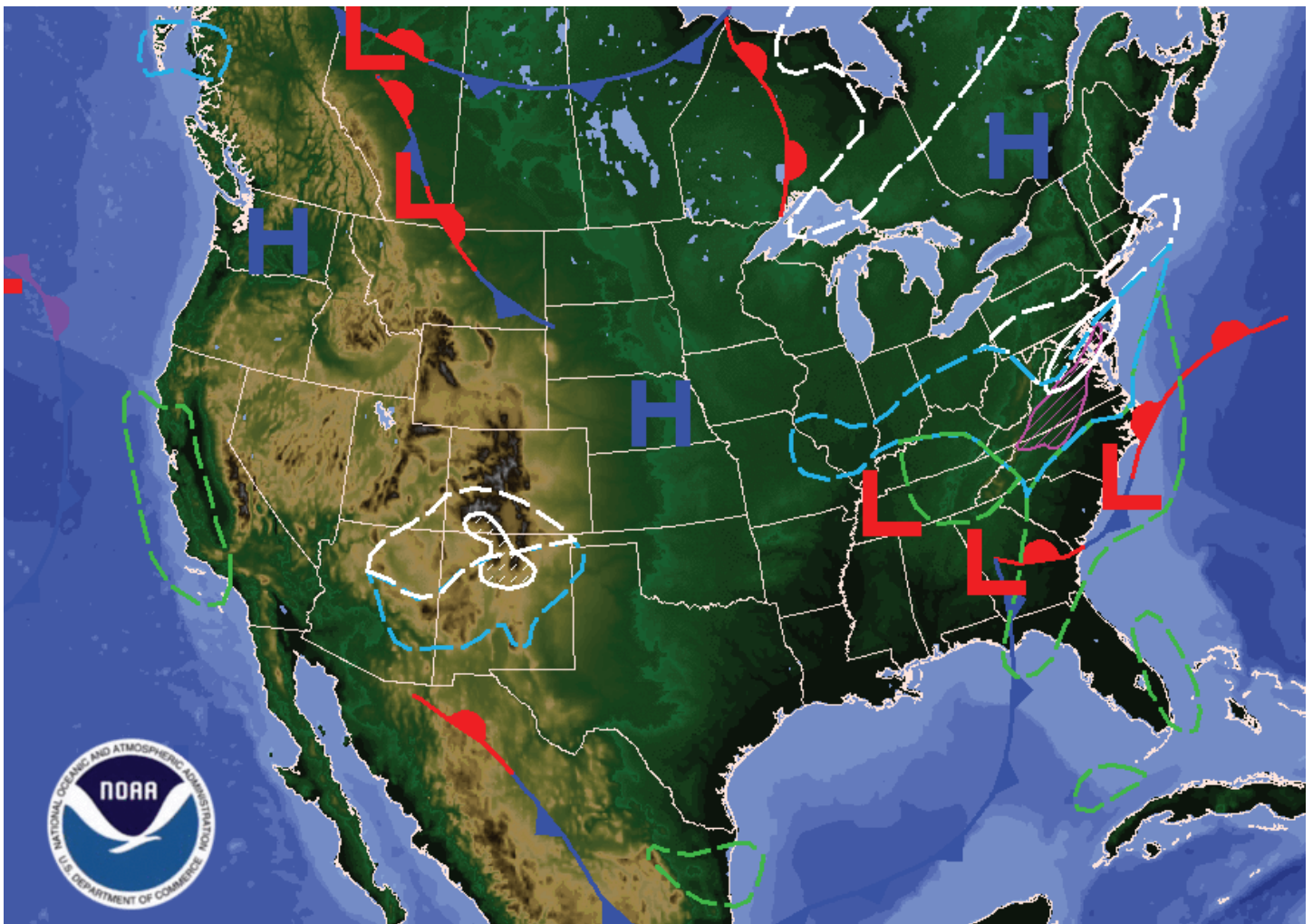
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.21

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:14 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Jan 13, 2019, issued 4:00 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)
Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)
Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)
Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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BANNER UP!

A young boy was sitting on a bench in a park when a stranger walked by and stopped. Looking at Will and his dog, he asked, What kind of dog is that, young fella?

Thinking the man was making fun of his dog, Will responded, Hes a genuine police dog, Sir!

Looking at the dog once again, he said, Police dog? He sure doesnt look like a police dog to me.

Of course not, said Will. Hes in the secret service.

Perhaps that can be said of many Christians: They are in the Lords Secret Service. They dont want anyone to know whom they serve.

Strange, isnt it, that the Christian life begins with a public confession of faith? A declaration that we willingly repent of our sins, and choose to follow the Lord. Gods Word makes it clear that If we tell others that Jesus Christ is our Lord, and really believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Its all rather simple, isnt it? If we say it, according to Gods Word, we are to do it. On the one hand, its easy to profess Jesus in church, but it is quite different to live as He would have us to live in the workplace, the gym, the Parent-Teacher meetings, lunches with business partners, customers, or whomever we dont see in church on a regular basis. But Gods Word says, "Set up your banners!

Confession is much more than what Christians say. It is also what a Christian is. Our words are important, but not nearly as significant as what we do - especially when we think no one is looking.

Prayer: Lord, we only fool ourselves if we think we can fool You. May we be witnesses without walls at all times. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 20:5a May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 03/17/2019 Groton American Legion Spring Fundraiser
- 04/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/27/2019 Fireman's Stag
- 05/04/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/27/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 06/14/2019 SDSU Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 06/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 06/21/2019 Best Ball Golf Tourney
- 07/04/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 07/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 08/22/2019 First Day of School
- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat/Halloween on Main
- 11/9/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course 2019 Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

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News from the  Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Bison 53, Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 49
Campbell County, Wyo. 71, Rapid City Stevens 64
Chamberlain 46, Bon Homme 44
Chester 67, Elkton-Lake Benton 54
Dell Rapids 72, Milbank 44
Edmunds Central 74, Eureka/Bowdle 41
Gayville-Volin 66, Burke 62
Harrisburg 67, Douglas 35
Langford 71, Great Plains Lutheran 29
Luverne, Minn. 78, Garretson 61
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 55, Huron 36
Tea Area 95, Canton 56
Todd County 68, St. Francis Indian 52
Watertown 62, Sioux Falls Washington 45
Wright, Wyo. 63, Belle Fourche 52
Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D. 61, Wilmot 48
Yankton 62, Aberdeen Central 29
281 Conference Tournament
First Round
Highmore-Harrold 57, Hitchcock-Tulare 22
James Valley Christian 62, Wessington Springs 37
Jones County Tournament
Championship
White River 97, Colome 41
Fifth Place
Stanley County 58, Kadoka Area 51
Seventh Place
Bennett County 63, Philip 47
Third Place
Jones County 49, Lyman 30
Pheasant Shoot-Out
Little Wound 85, Groton Area 72
Parkston 62, Flandreau Indian 49
Redfield/Doland 63, Gregory 54
Timber Lake 63, Northwestern 52
Sanford Pentagon Heritage Classic
Fergus Falls, Minn. 67, Lower Brule 41
George-Little Rock, Iowa 66, Red Cloud 49
Hibbing, Minn. 69, Deubrook 31
Sioux Falls Christian 69, Sioux Center, Iowa 55
St. Thomas More 56, Unity Christian, Iowa 33
West River Tournament
Championship

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Hot Springs 0, Upton, Wyo. 0
Fifth Place
Edgemont 48, Newell 47
Seventh Place
New Underwood 46, Moorcroft, Wyo. 23
Third Place
Faith 55, Wall 49

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Belle Fourche 39, Wright, Wyo. 34
Burke 51, Gayville-Volin 35
Campbell County, Wyo. 52, Rapid City Stevens 40
Castlewood 57, Deuel 45
Chamberlain 37, Bon Homme 32
Chester 49, Elkton-Lake Benton 26
Edmunds Central 35, Eureka/Bowdle 24
Harrisburg 66, Unity Christian, Iowa 51
Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 69, Bison 15
Hill City 48, Sundance, Wyo. 25
Luverne, Minn. 69, Garretson 55
New Underwood 42, White River 40
Scotland 55, Freeman Academy/Marion 46
Sioux Falls Lincoln 56, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 39
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 63, Huron 27
Sioux Falls Washington 70, Watertown 52
Tea Area 65, Canton 34
Todd County 79, St. Francis Indian 44
Yankton 49, Aberdeen Central 44
Dakota State University Classic
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 51, Arlington 40
Hartington-Newcastle, Neb. 48, Canistota 43
Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 66, Hamlin 63
Little Wound 50, Kimball/White Lake 46
Menno 72, Lake Preston 55
Mitchell Christian 52, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 22
Tri-Valley 63, Platte-Geddes 49
Viborg-Hurley 69, Waverly-South Shore 65
Hanson Corn Palace Classic
Corsica/Stickney 56, DeSmet 40
Crofton, Neb. 48, Flandreau 35
Dell Rapids 76, Pine Ridge 44
Ethan 49, Warner 28
Freeman 46, Faulkton 42
Hanson 33, Sully Buttes 23
Irene-Wakonda 35, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 32
Lennox 61, St. Thomas More 57, OT
Waubay/Summit 50, Avon 40
Sanford Pentagon Heritage Classic
Deubrook 80, McLaughlin 44
Fergus Falls, Minn. 68, Lower Brule 31
Red Cloud 59, George-Little Rock, Iowa 41

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Sioux Center, Iowa 40, Sioux Falls Christian 34
West River Tournament
Championship
Faith 74, Edgemont 29
Fifth Place
Rapid City Christian 48, Hot Springs 29
Seventh Place
Oelrichs 58, Upton, Wyo. 49
Third Place
Moorcroft, Wyo. 58, Newell 47

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash
12-21-23-26-32
(twelve, twenty-one, twenty-three, twenty-six, thirty-two)
Estimated jackpot: \$33,000

Lotto America
14-17-19-32-52, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 5
(fourteen, seventeen, nineteen, thirty-two, fifty-two; Star Ball: seven; ASB: five)
Estimated jackpot: \$13.46 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$55 million

Powerball
07-36-48-57-58, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 2
(seven, thirty-six, forty-eight, fifty-seven, fifty-eight; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: two)
Estimated jackpot: \$96 million

Daum scores 37, South Dakota State rolls Oral Roberts 84-65

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mike Daum had 37 points and eight rebounds, Tevin King had seven assists and eight steals and South Dakota State beat Oral Roberts 84-65 on Saturday.

Skyler Flatten and freshman David Jenkins scored 15 points apiece for SDSU (14-6, 4-1 Summit League). The Jackrabbits had 21 assists on 30 field goals — led by Alex Arians' nine helpers. Jenkins, the second-leading scorer for SDSU at 19.8 points per game, was just 5 of 15 from the field.

SDSU led 51-34 at the break, let by Daum's 20 points, and by as many as 25 in the second half.

Emmanuel Nzekwesi had his seventh double-double of the season with 14 points and a career-high 18 rebounds for Oral Roberts (7-13, 3-2). Freshman Carlos Jurgens also scored 14 points with four 3-pointers and D.J. Weaver had 13 points and six boards. The Golden Eagles attempted just seven free throws compared to SDSU's 18.

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South Dakota health care system expands grief counseling

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota health care system is expanding its grief counseling program in the Black Hills region.

Regional Health has offered grief counseling in Spearfish and Belle Fourche, but is now adding services to Lead, Deadwood and Sturgis, the Black Hills Pioneer reported .

"It goes back to our community investment," said Patti Aurand, a hospice chaplain, bereavement coordinator and social work associate with Regional Health. "What are we doing to make sure we're taking care of people on all levels, on all spectrums."

The group meetings are open to residents whose love ones are facing serious health issues, those who've recently lost a love one or anyone who is actively grieving, Aurand said.

Processing grief can take a long time, and Aurand said she hopes the program will help people process lingering emotions they may face.

"I know what it is to have your heart feel literal pain when it's an emotional thing and like it is being pulled out of your chest, and not being able to breath, and wondering, 'Will anything ever be OK again?'" Aurand said. "And after going through some of those on my own, it's nice to be able to go, 'Yep, it sucks, but it can be done.'"

Regional Health is also offering an eight-week course called "Understanding Your Grief" for those dealing with a particularly difficult loss.

"That one ends up being a little bit more work for folks," Aurand said. "The thing I've loved about these materials is I see healing from the beginning to end, and even more importantly, the participants see healing."

The counseling services are part of Regional Health's Home and Hospice care program.

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

Rosebud police recover cash, drugs and guns in bust

ROSEBUD, S.D. (AP) — Police with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe say they recovered large amounts of cash, drugs and guns during an investigation that extended from the reservation to Nebraska.

The Rapid City Journal reports that more than \$40,000 in cash and large quantities of marijuana and methamphetamine were found on the reservation and in Valentine, Nebraska.

Police also found firearms, ammunition, high-capacity magazines and body armor.

No further details were available.

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Trump says he has 'no idea' if deal can be made with Pelosi

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, LISA MASCARO, JILL COLVIN and DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the partial government shutdown slipped into the record books, members of Congress had left town, no negotiations were scheduled and President Donald Trump tweeted into the void.

The president did not tip his hand Saturday on whether he will move ahead with an emergency declaration that could break the impasse, free up money for his wall without congressional approval and kick off legal challenges and a political storm over the use of that extraordinary step. A day earlier, he said he was not ready to do it "right now."

Lawmakers are due back in Washington from their states and congressional districts in the new week.

Trump fired off a series of tweets pushing back against the notion that he doesn't have a strategy to end what became the longest government shutdown in U.S. history when it entered its 22nd day Saturday. "Elections have consequences!" he declared, meaning the 2016 election in which "I promised safety and security" and, as part of that, a border wall.

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But there was another election, in November, and the consequence of that is that Democrats now control the House and they refuse to give Trump money for a wall.

Trump threatened anew that the shutdown could continue indefinitely. Later Saturday, he supplemented a day's worth of tweets by telephoning in to Fox News Channel's "Justice with Judge Jeanine" Pirro from the White House to continue his public relations blitz for the wall. Pirro pressed Trump on why he had yet to declare a national emergency. He said he's giving Congress a chance to "act responsibly."

Trump also said he has "no idea" whether he can get a deal with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who opposes spending money on an "ineffective, wasteful wall."

The president is expected in the new week to sign legislation passed by Congress to provide back pay for some 800,000 federal workers who aren't being paid during the shutdown. Paychecks were due Friday, but many workers received stubs with zeroes.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, traveling Saturday in Abu Dhabi, claimed that morale is good among U.S. diplomats even as many work without pay. "We're doing our best to make sure it doesn't impact our diplomacy," he said.

Almost half of the State Department employees in the U.S. and about one-quarter abroad have been furloughed during the shutdown. With the exception of certain local employees overseas, the rest are working without pay, like those tasked with supporting Pompeo's trip, which has thus far taken him to Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Bahrain, with additional stops to come.

An emergency declaration by Trump could break the stalemate by letting him use existing, unspent money to build the U.S.-Mexico border wall, without needing congressional approval. Democrats oppose that step but may be unable to stop it. Many Republicans are wary, too.

Nevertheless the administration has accelerated planning for it. Officials explored diverting money from a range of accounts, including \$13.9 billion given to the Army Corps of Engineers after last year's deadly hurricanes and floods. That option appeared to lose steam following an outcry.

Other possibilities included tapping asset forfeiture funds, such as money seized from drug kingpins, according to a congressional Republican not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations. The White House also was eyeing military construction money, another politically difficult choice because it would take away from a backlog of hundreds of projects.

Trump has been counseled by outside advisers to move toward declaring a national emergency for the "crisis" that he says exists at the southern border. This, as polls suggest Trump is getting most of the blame for the shutdown.

But some in the White House are trying to apply the brakes. Jared Kushner was among those opposed to the declaration, arguing to his father-in-law that pursuing a broader immigration deal was a better option. A person familiar with White House thinking said that in meetings this past week, the message was that the administration is in no rush and wants to consider various options. The person was unauthorized to discuss private sessions and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Pelosi argued that Trump is merely trying to steer attention away from special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and other White House problems. "This is a big diversion, and he's a master of diversion," she told reporters.

Trump has told advisers he believes the fight for the wall, even if he never gets money for it, is a political win for him.

Some of the outside advisers who want him to declare a national emergency say it could have two benefits.

First, it would allow him to claim that he was the one to act to reopen the government. Second, inevitable legal challenges would send the matter to court, allowing Trump to continue the fight for the wall — and continue to excite his supporters — while not actually closing the government or immediately requiring him to start construction.

But while that might end the standoff and allow Congress to move to other priorities, some Republicans believe such a declaration would usurp congressional power and could lead future Democratic presidents to make similar moves to advance liberal priorities.

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"Most conservatives want it to be the last resort he would use," said Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., a leader of the conservative House Freedom Caucus who speaks to Trump frequently. "But those same conservatives, I'm sure if it's deployed, would embrace him as having done all he could do to negotiate with Democrats."

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey, Colleen Long, Alan Fram, Lolita Baldor, Zeke Miller and Laurie Kellman in Washington and Matthew Lee in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Arab nations inch toward rehabilitating Syria's Assad

By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — He has survived eight years of war and billions of dollars in money and weapons aimed at toppling him. Now Syrian President Bashar Assad is poised to be readmitted to the fold of Arab nations, a feat once deemed unthinkable as he forcefully crushed the uprising against his family's rule.

Gulf Arab nations, once the main backers of rebels trying to oust Assad, are lining up to reopen their embassies in Syria, worried about leaving the country at the heart of the Arab world to regional rivals Iran and Turkey and missing out on lucrative post-war reconstructive projects. Key border crossings with neighbors, shuttered for years by the war, have reopened, and Arab commercial airlines are reportedly considering resuming flights to Damascus.

And as President Donald Trump plans to pull out America's 2,000 soldiers from northeastern Syria, government troops are primed to retake the area they abandoned in 2012 at the height of the war. This would be a significant step toward restoring Assad's control over all of Syria, leaving only the northwest in the hands of rebels, most of them jihadis.

It can seem like a mind-boggling reversal for a leader whose military once seemed dangerously close to collapse. But Russia's military intervention, which began in 2015, steadily reversed Assad's losses, allowing his troops, aided by Iranian-backed fighters, to recapture cities like Homs and Aleppo, key to his rule.

Assad rules over a country in ruins, with close to half a million people killed and half the population displaced. Major fighting may still lie ahead. But many see the war nearing its end, and the 53-year-old leader is sitting more comfortably than he has in the past eight years.

"Rehabilitation by Arab states is inevitable," said Faysal Itani, a resident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East.

A key motive for Sunni Muslim Gulf countries is to blunt the involvement of their Shiite-led foe, Iran, which saw its influence expand rapidly in the chaos of Syria's war.

"Saudi Arabia tried briefly to help overthrow him when he seemed most vulnerable using proxy militants," Itani said. "With his regime likely to survive, however, Saudi Arabia would prefer to try and exercise influence over Assad to balance against Iran while avoiding escalation with Iran itself."

After Assad led a crackdown on protesters in 2011, Syria was cast out as a pariah by much of the Arab and Western world. It lost its seat at the Arab League and was hit by crippling sanctions by the international community, as the U.S. and European diplomats closed their diplomatic missions.

But Syria's isolation was never complete. China, Russia, Brazil, India and South Africa maintained diplomatic ties. In the Arab world, Lebanon, Iraq and Algeria never broke ranks with Syria. Propped up by Russia, China and Iran, Assad never really felt the pinch politically.

A Saudi attempt to patch up relations with Assad would be a public acknowledgement of the kingdom's failure to oust him. At the same time, the involvement of Gulf Arab governments and private companies is crucial for any serious reconstruction effort in Syria. Reconstruction costs are estimated between \$200 and \$350 billion.

Last month, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, himself an international outcast, flew to Damascus on a Russian jet, becoming the first Arab leader to visit Syria since 2011. The visit was largely seen as a

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precursor for similar steps by other Arab leaders.

On Dec. 27, the United Arab Emirates reopened its embassy in Damascus with a public ceremony, in the most significant Arab overture yet toward the Assad government, almost certainly coordinated with Saudi Arabia. The Bahrain Embassy followed the next day.

The debate now appears to be about when, not whether, to re-admit Syria to the Arab League. At a meeting in Cairo on Wednesday, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri said Syria's return to the League is connected to developments on the political track to end the crisis. Some officials in Lebanon insist Syria should be invited to an Arab economic summit the country is hosting next week, although final decision rests with the League.

"It could happen slower or faster, but if Assad is going to stay where he is, then obviously countries in the region are going to try to make the best of that situation," said Aron Lund, a fellow with The Century Foundation. "American politicians can sit in splendid isolation on the other side of an ocean and pretend Syria isn't what it is," he said. "But King Abdullah of Jordan can't."

The Arab overtures come amid a shifting landscape in the Western world.

The planned U.S. pullout from Syria is part of Trump's "America First" policy. He has repeatedly said he was not interested in removing Assad from power or keeping American troops involved in "endless wars" in the region, most recently describing Syria as "sand and death."

Right-wing parties and populist movements on the rise in Europe are also on friendly terms with Assad, seeing him as a secular bulwark against Islamic extremists.

Even Turkey, whose president in 2012 famously vowed to pray at Omayyad Mosque in Damascus after Assad's ouster, has signaled it would consider working with Assad again if he wins in free and fair elections.

For Syrians who rose up against Assad's rule, it can seem like the country is right back where it started eight years ago, only with half a million dead and cities in ruins.

Analysts believe Syria under Assad will likely continue to face conflicts and sputter on in limbo for years to come, with only a partial recovery. But he will likely cling to power and do business with anyone who will do business with him.

"I don't imagine Assad's Syria becoming a fine upstanding member of the international community, but nor do I think it will languish in isolation," Itani said.

Rivers, Chargers look to end dominance by Brady, Patriots

By KYLE HIGHTOWER, AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Tom Brady typically shrugs off any mention of records or milestones he sets.

But even he had to chuckle at the one he and Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers will mark when they meet in Sunday's divisional playoffs.

Brady, who will be 41 years and 163 days old, and Rivers, at 37 years and 36 days old, will combine to be the oldest pair of quarterbacks to face each other in an NFL playoff game, breaking the mark Brady held with Peyton Manning.

"Nice," Brady said of the impending footnote. "Nice and old."

Sunday will be just the fourth playoff meeting between the teams, with the Patriots holding a 2-1 edge.

Rivers enters Sunday with a 1-7 record against the Patriots, including 0-4 in games in Foxborough and 0-2 in the playoffs. Rivers earned his lone victory against New England during the 2008 regular season, when the Chargers were still in San Diego. Brady was sidelined for that game by a knee injury and Matt Cassel started in his place.

Brady is 7-0 as a starter against Rivers .

The Patriots (11-5), who captured their 10th straight AFC East title this season, will be seeking their eighth consecutive trip to the AFC title game.

The Chargers (13-4) haven't even been to the conference title game since losing 21-12 to the Patriots during the 2007 season.

Rivers played in that game just days removed from tearing the ACL in his right knee. He limped his way

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through it while being intercepted twice and failing to throw a touchdown pass.

It's become the toughness brand for a quarterback that hasn't missed a game since becoming the Chargers starter in 2006.

Rivers, who led his team to five wins in its last six regular-season games and a road win at Baltimore in the wild-card round last week, said he's tried to keep past shortcomings against New England out of his mind this week.

"It's not something you think about a whole lot," he said. "It exists and it's there but again, and I mean this, I don't feel that I'm playing Tom. Certainly, it's a Tom Brady-led team and we know how things work with the quarterback and the head coach that have the record attached to it. We've got a heck of a challenge."

It will also be a chance to earn a signature win for second-year Chargers coach Anthony Lynn, who has steered Los Angeles through its relocation and a season that included a game in London.

To have another chance at this stage of his career to notch a playoff win against a New England team that has been the standard in the conference is an opportunity not lost on Rivers.

"Fired up to have a shot," Rivers said.

Here are some things to watch for in Sunday's game:

ROAD WARRIORS

One thing that gives the Chargers confidence heading into Foxborough is their record away from Los Angeles this season.

The Chargers are facing a Patriots team that is 8-0 in Gillette Stadium this season. But Los Angeles is 8-1 on the road, with its lone blemish coming against the crosstown Los Angeles Rams.

"We have a tough football team, no doubt. I believe that. I think going on the road, it really doesn't faze this team," Lynn said.

"We love ball, we like playing football, we like competing and we know going into Foxborough, they're undefeated there and they're tough to beat, period. It doesn't matter where you play the Patriots; they're tough to beat."

TOUGH STREAK

In addition to earning his first postseason win over New England, Rivers will also be trying to help the Chargers end their recent struggles in the divisional round.

Each of the Chargers' past three trips to the playoffs have ended in this round — 24-17 to Denver in 2013, 17-14 to the New York Jets in 2009 and 35-24 to Pittsburgh in 2008.

GORDON'S A GO

Chargers running back Melvin Gordon is expected to be active Sunday, despite missing the first practice of the week to rest the knee injury he sustained in their wild-card win over the Ravens. He was limited for Thursday's workout, but removed from the injury report on Friday.

Los Angeles' offense is at its best when Gordon can take the pressure off Rivers. He had an 87-yard touchdown in last year's regular-season meeting with the Patriots. He also has 12 touchdowns in the Chargers' past nine games on the road, including playoffs.

WEATHER FACTOR

The forecast for Sunday in Foxborough is 29 degrees, which recently has been a good thing for the Patriots.

They are 13-0 at home since 2011 in games in which the temperature was 32 degrees or colder.

The Chargers contemplated staying on the East Coast after last week's game in Baltimore, but ultimately decided to return to California to practice.

Patriots coach Bill Belichick isn't counting on the weather being that much of an advantage, though.

"They're a good football team. We're playing the Chargers. We're not playing the weather," he said. "Whatever it is, it is."

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

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Follow Kyle Hightower on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/khightower>

Woman who fled Saudi Arabia reaches her new home in Canada

By **ROB GILLIES, Associated Press**

TORONTO (AP) — Tired but smiling, an 18-year-old Saudi woman who said she feared death if deported back home arrived Saturday in Canada, which offered her asylum in a case that attracted global attention after she mounted a social media campaign.

"This is Rahaf Alqunun, a very brave new Canadian," Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said arm-in-arm with the Saudi woman in Toronto's airport.

Rahaf Mohammed Alqunun smiled broadly as she exited an airport arrival door sporting a Canada zipper hoodie and a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees hat, capping a dramatic week that saw her flee her family while visiting Kuwait and before flying to Bangkok. Once there, she barricaded herself in an airport hotel to avoid deportation and tweeted about her situation.

On Friday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada would accept Alqunun as a refugee. Her situation has highlighted the cause of women's rights in Saudi Arabia, where several women fleeing abuse by their families have been caught trying to seek asylum abroad in recent years and returned home.

Freeland said Alqunun preferred not to take questions Saturday.

"She is obviously very tired after a long journey and she preferred to go and get settled," Freeland said. "But it was Rahaf's choice to come out and say hello to Canadians. She wanted Canadians to see that she's here, that she's well and that she's very happy to be in her new home."

After arriving she was off to get winter clothes, said Mario Calla, executive director of COSTI Immigrant Services, which is helping her settle in temporary housing and applying for a health card.

Calla said Alqunun has friends in Toronto who she would be meeting up with this weekend.

"She did comment to me about the cold," Freeland said.

"It does get warmer," Freeland said she told her.

Alqunun flew to Toronto via Seoul, South Korea, according to Thai immigration Police Chief Surachate Hakpurn. Alqunun tweeted two pictures from her plane seat — one with what appears to be a glass of wine and her passport and another holding her passport while on the plane with the hashtag "I did it" and the emojis showing a plane, hearts and a wine glass.

Canada's decision to grant her asylum could further upset the country's relations with Saudi Arabia.

In August, Saudi Arabia expelled Canada's ambassador to the kingdom and withdrew its own ambassador after Canada's Foreign Ministry tweeted support for women's right activists who had been arrested. The Saudis also sold Canadian investments and ordered their citizens studying in Canada to leave.

Freeland avoided an answer when asked what Alqunun's case would mean to Saudi-Canadian relations.

There was no immediate Saudi government reaction, nor any mention of her arrival in state media. But a Saudi government-sanctioned body, the National Society for Human Rights, said it deplores the methods used by some foreign officials and organizations to "incite" some young Saudi females to disobey their families and leave the country.

In a statement late Saturday, the group's director, Muftal al-Qahtani, slammed alleged political motives of some countries and said attempts to encourage these women to disobey their families leaves some vulnerable to abuse and trafficking, and harms families. Al-Qahtani insisted women facing abuse in the kingdom can turn to Saudi authorities and local organizations for assistance.

Freeland said that the U.N. refugee agency found Alqunun was in danger in Thailand and that Canada's government is glad it was able to act quickly to offer her refuge.

Alqunun's father arrived in Bangkok on Tuesday, but his daughter refused to meet with him.

Several other countries, including Australia, had been in talks with the U.N.'s refugee agency to accept Alqunun, Surachate said.

"She chose Canada. It's her personal decision," he said.

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Australian media reported that UNHCR had withdrawn its referral for Alqunun to be resettled in Australia because Canberra was taking too long to decide on her asylum.

"When referring cases with specific vulnerabilities who need immediate resettlement, we attach great importance to the speed at which countries consider and process cases," a UNHCR spokesperson in Bangkok told The Associated Press in an email reply on condition of anonymity because the person wasn't authorized to discuss the case publicly.

"Why did Rahaf go to Canada instead of her preferred choice of Australia where she had friends?" Human Rights Watch executive director Kenneth Roth said in a tweet. "Because she needed safety from her Saudi pursuers fast, and Canada expedited her case while Australia slow-walked it."

Canada's ambassador saw her off at the airport, where Alqunun thanked everyone for helping her. She plans to start learning more English, though she already speaks it more than passably.

Alqunun was stopped Jan. 5 at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport by immigration police who denied her entry and seized her passport.

She barricaded herself in an airport hotel room where her social media campaign got enough public and diplomatic support that Thai officials admitted her temporarily under the protection of U.N. officials, who granted her refugee status Wednesday.

Surachate said her father — whose name has not been released — denied physically abusing Alqunun or trying to force her into an arranged marriage, which were among the reasons she gave for her flight. He said Alqunun's father wanted his daughter back but respected her decision.

"He has 10 children. He said the daughter might feel neglected sometimes," Surachate said.

UNHCR spokeswoman Lauren La Rose said the fact she was processed so quickly is a credit to those that made it happen.

"This is someone who was clearly in harm's way, who clearly felt her life with her threatened, and my colleagues in concert with governments in Thailand and Canada recognized that need," she said

Associated Press video journalist David Martin in Toronto and AP writers Tassanee Vejpongsa in Bangkok and Aya Btrawy in Subai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

Selective shutdown? Trump tries to blunt impact, takes heat

By JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government shutdown is wreaking havoc on many Americans: Hundreds of thousands of federal employees don't know when they'll see their next paycheck, and low-income people who rely on the federal safety net worry about whether they'll make ends meet should the stalemate in Washington carry on another month.

But if you're a sportsman looking to hunt game, a gas company planning to drill offshore or a taxpayer awaiting your refund, you're in luck: This shutdown won't affect your plans.

All administrations get some leeway to choose which services to freeze and which to maintain when a budget standoff in Washington forces some agencies to shutter. But in the selective reopening of offices, experts say they see a willingness to cut corners, scrap prior plans and wade into legally dubious territory to mitigate the pain. Some noted the choices seem targeted at shielding the Republican-leaning voters whom Trump and his party need to stick with them.

The cumulative effect is a government shutdown — now officially the longest in U.S. history — that some Americans may find financially destabilizing and others may hardly notice.

Russell T. Vought, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, said the overarching message from Trump has been "to make this shutdown as painless as possible, consistent with the law."

"We have built on past efforts within this administration not to have the shutdown be used to be weaponized against the American people," he said.

Others say such a strategy suggests a lack of urgency and a willingness to let the political impasse in Washington drag on indefinitely.

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"The strategy seems to be to keep the shutdown in place, not worry about the effect on employees and furloughed people and contractors, but where the public might be annoyed, give a little," said Alice Rivlin, who led OMB during the 21-day shutdown in 1996, the previous recordholder for the longest in history.

That's a clear difference between then and now, Rivlin said.

"We weren't trying to make it better. We were trying to emphasize the pain so it would be over," she said. "We wanted it to end. I'm not convinced the Trump administration does."

The Trump administration earlier this week announced that the IRS will issue tax refunds during the shutdown, circumventing a 2011 decision barring the agency from distributing refunds until the Treasury Department is funded. The National Treasury Employees Union filed a lawsuit, arguing its workers are being unconstitutionally forced to return to work without pay.

Some agencies are finding creative ways to fund services they want to restore.

The administration has emphasized continued use of public lands in general, and particularly for hunters and oil and gas developers, angering environmental groups. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, using funds leftover from 2018, this week announced it will direct dozens of wildlife refuges to return staffers to work, ensuring planned activities on those lands, including organized hunts, continue.

Barbara Wainman, a spokeswoman for the agency, said most refuges have remained accessible to hunters throughout the shutdown, and the decision to staff them was made based on three criteria: resource management, high visitation and previously scheduled programming, which includes organized hunts and school field trips. Wainman said 17 of the 38 refuges have scheduled hunts that would have been canceled without the restaffing effort.

The IRS is using user fees to restore the income verification program, used by mortgage lenders to confirm the income of a borrower and considered a critical tool for the banking industry. After national parks were left open but unstaffed, causing damage to delicate ecosystems, the National Park Service announced it would take "an extraordinary step" and use visitation fees to staff some of the major parks. And despite the shutdown, the Bureau of Land Management is continuing work related to drilling efforts in Alaska.

Trump has refused to sign spending bills for nine of the 15 Cabinet-level departments until Congress approves his request for \$5.7 billion in funding to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Democrats have refused. The president initially said he would be "proud" to own the partial shutdown, but he quickly shifted blame onto Democratic leaders and has flirted with taking some extraordinary measures to find money for the wall. Although most Republicans have stood by the president, others have expressed discomfort with the strategy.

The focus on services that reach rural voters, influential industries and voters' pocketbooks is intended to protect Republicans from blowback, said Barry Anderson, who served as assistant director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1988 to 1998.

During the 1996 shutdown, Anderson said, he and others met each day to review which offices and services should be deemed essential. He said tax refunds never made the cut.

"A government agency may employ services in advance of appropriations only when there's a reasonable connection between the functions being performed and the safety of human life or protection of property," he said. "How does issuing tax refunds fall under either of those categories? It's not a human life or property issue. I don't know the proper word: surprised, aghast, flabbergasted.

"This," he said, "is to keep Republican senators' phones silent."

OMB has held regular conference calls with agencies and is fielding a high volume of requests for services they'd like to resume. In addition, OMB officials are intentionally working to legally reopen as much of the government as possible, according to a senior administration official, adding that agencies are permitted to update their lapse plans as the shutdown progresses. The official was not authorized to discuss the internal discussions publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Across the government, agencies are scrambling. The Food and Drug Administration has scaled back on food inspections. The Department of Agriculture recently announced that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides food aid to nearly 40 million low-income Americans, will continue to

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operate through February because of a loophole in the short-term spending bill, which expired Dec. 22. But should the shutdown stretch into March, the department's reserves for the program, \$3 billion, won't cover a month of benefits for all who need them. Other feeding programs, such as school lunch, food distribution and WIC, which provides nutrition aid to pregnant women, mothers and babies, are also in jeopardy should the shutdown last until March.

Hundreds of federal contracts for low-income Americans receiving housing assistance are expiring. The Department of Housing and Urban Development is unable to renew them and has instead directed private owners to dip into their reserves to cover shortfalls.

As time goes on, more and more programs will become vital, said Linda Bilmes, a public policy professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, and the meaning of what's essential will shift.

"Even apart from the fact that there may be particular instances of things that are being manipulated for political purposes," she said, "there are also realities that government agencies are facing as they reassess what is absolutely essential to do now that we're here, with no immediate end in sight."

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

The shutdown today: Trump tweets he's waiting for Democrats

By The Associated Press

What's up with the partial government shutdown on Day 23.

WHAT'S NEW TODAY

President Donald Trump tweeted Saturday that he's at the White House waiting for Democrats to come back from their "vacations" to work on a deal to end the shutdown. Both houses of Congress adjourned Friday for the weekend; lawmakers are due back in Washington next week.

The shutdown became the longest in U.S. history, eclipsing a 21-day closure during the Clinton administration.

A brown pelican that landed near docks in Rhode Island will likely remain in the state until after the shutdown because the wildlife group caring for the bird cannot get federal permits it needs to move the pelican across state lines to a more southern location.

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"Democrats should come back to Washington and work to end the Shutdown, while at the same time ending the horrible humanitarian crisis at our Southern Border. I am in the White House waiting for you!" - President Donald Trump in a tweet Saturday.

"He doesn't really have the authority to make a deal." - Republican Rep. Mike Simpson of Idaho, about Vice President Mike Pence.

WHAT'S COMING NEXT?

Congress returns to session next week, but it remained unclear when the shutdown will end.

Trump is expected to sign legislation providing back pay to some 800,000 federal workers who have either been idled or are working without pay for as long as the shutdown lasts.

The economic pain spreads. Fallout from the shutdown is hurting Native Americans as dwindling funds hamper access to health care and other services. In New Mexico, one police officer patrolled a reservation larger in size than Houston on a shift that normally has three people.

WHAT REMAINS CLOSED

Nine of the 15 Cabinet-level departments have not been funded, including Agriculture, Homeland Security, State, Transportation, Interior and Justice. Some iconic National Park facilities are shuttered as are the Smithsonian museums and the National Zoo in Washington. Nearly everyone at NASA is being told to stay home, as are most at the Internal Revenue Service, which processes tax returns and issues refunds,

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though the administration says it will issue refunds during the shutdown.

WHO IS AT WORK BUT NOT GETTING PAID

Some 420,000 federal employees whose work is declared essential are working without pay, including the FBI, TSA and other federal law enforcement officers. Some staff at the State and Homeland Security departments are also working without compensation.

The House and Senate have voted to ensure that all federal employees will be paid retroactively after the partial government shutdown ends. The bill now heads to President Trump, who is expected to sign it.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Former Obama housing chief Julian Castro joins 2020 campaign

By PAUL J. WEBER, Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Assailing President Donald Trump for “a crisis of leadership,” former Obama Cabinet member Julian Castro joined the 2020 presidential race Saturday as the rush of Democrats making early moves to challenge the incumbent accelerates.

Castro, who could end up being the only Latino in what is shaping up to be a crowded Democratic field, made immigration a centerpiece of his announcement in his hometown of San Antonio, less than 200 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border.

Two days after the president visited the border to promote his promised wall, Castro mocked Trump for claiming that the U.S. faces an “invasion” from its ally to the south. “He called it a national security crisis,” Castro said. “Well, there is a crisis today. It’s a crisis of leadership. Donald Trump has failed to uphold the values of our great nation.”

Castro, the 44-year-old grandson of a Mexican immigrant, said he was running for president “because it’s time for new leadership, because it’s time for new energy and it’s time for a new commitment to make sure that the opportunities that I’ve had are available to every American.”

He made the announcement during the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, and as the field of 2020 contenders widens and anticipation grows around bigger names still considering runs.

Castro was San Antonio’s mayor for five years and U.S. housing secretary in President Barack Obama’s second term. He became the second Democrat to formally enter race, after former Maryland Rep. John Delaney.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has also started an exploratory committee for president, and four other Democratic senators are taking steady steps toward running. Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu elected to Congress, said this week she is planning a bid, too.

For his part, Trump said he isn’t worried about the burgeoning field of Democratic opponents. He has already announced that he’s running for re-election.

“I love what I see,” Trump said Saturday night when asked about the competition during a telephone interview with Fox News Channel. He recited a list of what he views as his accomplishments, including low unemployment, tax cuts and trade deals.

“I don’t know. How does somebody beat that?” the president said.

Asked to identify the one Democrat he’d like to run against, Trump named former Vice President Joe Biden, a two-time presidential candidate who has yet to announce his intentions for 2020.

Castro is getting an early start in trying to stand out. His first trip as a candidate comes Monday, to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, where an outcry has begun as the White House considers diverting disaster funding to pay for the wall.

The impasse over paying for a border wall that Trump made a central part of his 2016 campaign has led to the partial federal closure. That stalemate, along with Trump’s hard-line immigration stands, drew sharp rebukes from Castro.

“There are serious issues that need to be addressed in our broken immigration system, but seeking asy-

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lum is a legal right. And the cruel policies of this administration are doing real and lasting harm," he said. He argued for securing the border in a "smart and humane way."

"There is no way in hell that caging babies is a smart or a right or good way to do it. We say no to building a wall and say yes to building community. We say no to scapegoating immigrants," he said.

Joining Castro at the campaign kickoff was his twin brother, Democratic Rep. Joaquin Castro, chairman of the Hispanic congressional caucus and a frequent Trump critic. The Spanish-style plaza in the Castro twins' boyhood neighborhood was packed with supporters who streamed through the gates between a mariachi band. Castro had said leading up to his announcement that a Latino candidate was a must in the 2020 field.

That group of hopefuls is starting to take shape even though the first primary elections are more than a year away.

Sen. Kamala Harris of California this past week published a memoir, a staple of presidential candidates. Former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke is doing little to dim speculation that he might jump into a field that has no clear front-runner.

Castro is aware he lacks the name recognition of potential 2020 rivals or the buzz surrounding O'Rourke, whose flirtations with 2020 have tantalized donors and activists after a close race last year against Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas.

Even some supporters at Castro's announcement could be torn if O'Rourke gets in the race. Diana Delrosario, a social worker in San Antonio, warned she might cry while she recounted how Castro once went out of his way as mayor to help wheel her mother out of a restaurant.

"I have this heart for Julian. But it's going to be a big discussion if Beto decides to run," said Delrosario, 45.

Castro, who has repeatedly dismissed talk that an O'Rourke candidacy would complicate his own chances, has framed the neighborhood and his upbringing as the story of an underdog.

He was raised by a local Latina activist, and after a brief career in law, was elected mayor of the nation's seventh-largest city at 34. It wasn't long before Democrats nationally embraced him as a star in the making, particularly one from Texas, where a booming Hispanic population is rapidly changing the state's demographics and improving the party's fortunes.

Castro delivered the keynote speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention. Two years later, Obama picked him to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

He was on the short list of Hillary Clinton's potential running mates in 2016. During Castro's trip this past week to Nevada, one state Latino business leader told Castro that he should again be a top contender for vice president if his campaign falls short.

Like other Democrats running, Castro has said he will not accept money from political action committees tied to corporations and unions, and he has sought to introduce himself to voters as a champion for universal health care and affordable housing.

Follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pauljweber

Associated Press writer Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Trump tweets into the void as shutdown sets record

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, LISA MASCARO, JILL COLVIN and DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the partial government shutdown slipped into the record books Saturday, members of Congress had left town, no negotiations were scheduled and President Donald Trump tweeted into the void.

He did not tip his hand on whether he will move ahead with an emergency declaration that could break the impasse, free up money for his wall without congressional approval and kick off legal challenges and a political storm over the use of that extraordinary step. A day earlier, he said he was not ready to do it "right now."

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Lawmakers are due back in Washington from their states and congressional districts in the new week. Trump fired off a series of tweets pushing back against the notion that he doesn't have a strategy to end what became the longest government shutdown in U.S. history when it entered its 22nd day Saturday. "Elections have consequences!" he declared, meaning the 2016 election in which "I promised safety and security" and, as part of that, a border wall.

But there was another election, in November, and the consequence of that is that Democrats now control the House and they refuse to give Trump money for a wall.

Trump threatened anew that the shutdown could continue indefinitely. Later Saturday, he supplemented a day's worth of tweets by telephoning in to Fox News Channel's "Justice with Judge Jeanine" Pirro from the White House to continue his public relations blitz for the wall. Pirro pressed Trump on why he had yet to declare a national emergency. He said he's giving Congress a chance to "act responsibly."

Trump also said he has "no idea" whether he can get a deal with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who opposes spending money on an "ineffective, wasteful wall."

The president is expected in the new week to sign legislation passed by Congress to provide back pay for some 800,000 federal workers who aren't being paid during the shutdown. Paychecks were due Friday, but many workers received stubs with zeroes.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, traveling Saturday in Abu Dhabi, claimed that morale is good among U.S. diplomats even as many work without pay. "We're doing our best to make sure it doesn't impact our diplomacy," he said.

Almost half of the State Department employees in the U.S. and about one-quarter abroad have been furloughed during the shutdown. With the exception of certain local employees overseas, the rest are working without pay, like those tasked with supporting Pompeo's trip, which has thus far taken him to Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Bahrain, with additional stops to come.

An emergency declaration by Trump could break the stalemate by letting him use existing, unspent money to build the U.S.-Mexico border wall, without needing congressional approval. Democrats oppose that step but may be unable to stop it. Many Republicans are wary, too.

Nevertheless the administration has accelerated planning for it. Officials explored diverting money from a range of accounts, including \$13.9 billion given to the Army Corps of Engineers after last year's deadly hurricanes and floods. That option appeared to lose steam following an outcry.

Other possibilities included tapping asset forfeiture funds, such as money seized from drug kingpins, according to a congressional Republican not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations. The White House also was eyeing military construction money, another politically difficult choice because it would take away from a backlog of hundreds of projects.

Trump has been counseled by outside advisers to move toward declaring a national emergency for the "crisis" that he says exists at the southern border. This, as polls suggest Trump is getting most of the blame for the shutdown.

But some in the White House are trying to apply the brakes. Jared Kushner was among those opposed to the declaration, arguing to his father-in-law that pursuing a broader immigration deal was a better option. A person familiar with White House thinking said that in meetings this past week, the message was that the administration is in no rush and wants to consider various options. The person was unauthorized to discuss private sessions and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Pelosi argued that Trump is merely trying to steer attention away from special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and other White House problems. "This is a big diversion, and he's a master of diversion," she told reporters.

Trump has told advisers he believes the fight for the wall, even if he never gets money for it, is a political win for him.

Some of the outside advisers who want him to declare a national emergency say it could have two benefits. First, it would allow him to claim that he was the one to act to reopen the government. Second, inevitable legal challenges would send the matter to court, allowing Trump to continue the fight for the wall — and

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continue to excite his supporters — while not actually closing the government or immediately requiring him to start construction.

But while that might end the standoff and allow Congress to move to other priorities, some Republicans believe such a declaration would usurp congressional power and could lead future Democratic presidents to make similar moves to advance liberal priorities.

"Most conservatives want it to be the last resort he would use," said Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., a leader of the conservative House Freedom Caucus who speaks to Trump frequently. "But those same conservatives, I'm sure if it's deployed, would embrace him as having done all he could do to negotiate with Democrats."

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey, Colleen Long, Alan Fram, Lolita Baldor, Zeke Miller and Laurie Kellman in Washington and Matthew Lee in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Chiefs roll past Colts 31-13 to reach AFC title game

By DAVE SKRETTA, AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Kansas City Chiefs' defense had heard the chorus of critics all season long, the ones that claimed their sieve-like line and shaky backfield would spoil young superstar Patrick Mahomes and cost them a chance to chase their first Super Bowl appearance in decades.

Well, that defense is a big reason why the Chiefs are one step away.

With persistent snow turning Arrowhead Stadium into a winter wonderland, the Chiefs successfully shut down Andrew Luck and the potent Indianapolis Colts on Saturday.

Mahomes and the rest of their own high-powered offense took care of the rest, rolling to a 31-13 victory in the divisional round to end 25 years of playoff frustration.

"We're such a different team," said Mahomes, who threw for 278 yards while running for a score. "We have such young players. We have such confidence we're going to win every single game."

Damien Williams ran through snow and muck for 129 yards and another score, and Tyreek Hill had 72 yards receiving and a touchdown run, as the Chiefs beat Indianapolis for the first time in five playoff meetings to earn their first AFC title game appearance since January 1994.

The AFC West champions will play the winner of Sunday's game between the division-rival Los Angeles Chargers and the New England Patriots next weekend for a spot in the Super Bowl in Atlanta.

"We wanted to light up the city," Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones said. "We didn't want to take the road down memory lane."

Andrew Luck was held to 203 yards passing for the Colts, while Marlon Mack was a non-factor on the ground. He had 46 yards rushing before leaving late in the fourth quarter with a hip injury.

"Was not expecting it to end today," Colts coach Frank Reich said. "We knew we were going up against a very good team, a very well-coached team. It's hard to lose. It's hard to lose when you've come this far with the team that we have and the guys that we have, so credit to the Chiefs.

"They outcoached us, they outplayed us," Reich said. "We just gave them too many opportunities."

The Chiefs set out to change history from the opening minutes, when they forced a three-and-out and then waltzed right over a Colts defense that nearly shut out the Texans a week ago. Mahomes and Co. scored on their first three possessions, then again just before halftime, to take a 24-7 lead.

If there was any question whether this would be Kansas City's day, it was answered when Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri missed a 23-yard field-goal try off the upright just before halftime. It was the first time in 22 postseason attempts that he'd missed from that close.

Not that the Chiefs thought they had it wrapped up.

They've had bigger playoff meltdowns against the Colts.

There was the 10-7 loss in which Lin Elliott missed three field goals when the Chiefs were the No. 1

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seed, and the loss at Arrowhead Stadium in 2003 in which nobody punted. Five years ago, they blew a 38-10 second-half lead against Luck and the Colts to spoil Andy Reid's first season.

Not this time.

Not with this Kansas City quarterback.

After shattering nearly every franchise passing record, Mahomes picked up right where he left off in his regular-season finale. He led the Chiefs on touchdown drives of 90 and 70 yards to open the game, quickly identified a favorite target in Travis Kelce, and shook off a banged-up knee to scramble for a touchdown late in the first half to give his team a big cushion.

Of course, the Chiefs (13-4) didn't need it the way their defense was playing.

The Colts (11-7) went three-and-out on their first four possessions, were outgained 185-12 in the first quarter, and Luck didn't complete a pass until he found T.Y. Hilton early in the second.

Their lone bright spot came when Zach Paschal recovered a blocked punt for a touchdown .

Even when the Colts caught a break and Sammy Watkins fumbled the ball to them late in the third quarter, they were quick to give it back. Dee Ford stripped Luck and fellow linebacker Justin Houston plopped on the ball, ruining another red-zone opportunity.

"It seemed like the rushers were getting there all night," Chiefs cornerback Kendall Fuller said. "Guys sticking coverage, playing good technique, good eyes and things like that."

The Colts finally scored an offensive touchdown with 5:31 left in the game. But in the perfect summation of their lousy afternoon, their erstwhile star kicker missed the extra point.

By that point, the party in the stands already had begun.

The Chiefs had lost six straight home playoff games, including heartbreakers to Pittsburgh and Tennessee the past two years. But a proud franchise that won its only Super Bowl title with Len Dawson in 1970, and last played for a spot behind Joe Montana, is once more one step away.

"I'm just happy for these guys in this locker room," Kelce said. "Playoff wins are hard to come by, let alone wins in the NFL. So, I mean, it's just exciting for us to be able to play next week."

SNOWBALL FIGHT

Reid was summoned to the corner of the stadium during the two-minute warning in the first half to implore fans to stop throwing snowballs on the field. Earlier in the half, one almost hit Colts punter Rigoberto Sanchez while he was kicking.

INJURIES

Colts: Center Ryan Kelly (knee) left late in the fourth quarter. ... FS Malik Hooker (foot) and DE Tyquan Lewis (knee) were inactive, while SS Mike Mitchell (calf) was placed on injured reserve earlier this week. That left the Colts defense without some key pieces.

Chiefs: Safety Eric Berry (heel) and running back Spencer Ware (hamstring) were inactive, though Berry — the team's emotional leader — broke down the pregame huddle in the north end zone.

UP NEXT

Chiefs: Await the Chargers-Patriots winner in the AFC title game.

Colts: Begin preparing for April's draft.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/tag/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Ex-kidnapping victims: Jayme Closs needs space, time to heal

By TAMMY WEBBER and BRADY McCOMBS, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Katie Beers' joy quickly turned to deep concern when she learned 13-year-old Jayme Closs had been found alive in rural Wisconsin nearly three months after police say a man shot and killed her parents then abducted the girl from their home.

"She is going to have to grieve the loss of her parents and also come to terms with the fact she was abducted, escaped and whatever (other) hell she went through," said Beers. "And it's not going to be easy."

Beers knows that better than most.

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Sunday will mark 26 years since a then-10-year-old Beers was rescued from an underground concrete bunker in Bay Shore, New York, where she had been held captive for more than two weeks by a family friend who had lured her to his home with the promise of birthday presents.

As Jayme begins to process her trauma, experts and former victims say what she needs most is space and time to discuss it on her own terms. And with the help of a supportive and understanding family, she likely will be able to recover and live a happy life.

"One of the things that helped me recover so quickly is that nobody forced me to talk about what happened," said Beers, 36, who is married and has two children. "I didn't even do interviews until I was 30. I didn't have to relive it every day."

Authorities said Jayme was skinny, disheveled and wearing shoes too big for her when she approached a stranger and pleaded for help Thursday in the small north woods town of Gordon, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from her hometown of Barron. Jake Thomas Patterson, 21, was quickly arrested and jailed on kidnapping and homicide charges.

It's unclear exactly what Jayme experienced — including whether she was coerced with threats or physically abused — so people must be careful how they interact with her, said Duane Bowers, a trauma therapist who works with families of missing and exploited children and adults.

Although friends and family might be eager to know details, the only control the victim has is when, to whom and how they tell their story, Bowers said, adding that's especially true of Jayme, who has lost so much.

For most child kidnapping victims, they have the hope that their parents will find them, "but in this case she knew her folks were dead and couldn't find her," Bowers said. So now, "she needs to feel ... in control and experience her memories in a way that ... doesn't retrigger" her trauma.

Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 when she was kidnapped at knifepoint from her Salt Lake City home in 2002, told The Associated Press that everyone endures different mental and psychological trauma after kidnappings, but Jayme will have to confront the fact that there "is no going back to the way things were."

"Probably one of the more difficult issues is going to be finding that new sense of normalcy in her life," said Smart, a 31-year-old mother of three. "Not recreating the old but (creating) the new and learning to be OK with that."

She cautioned questions that might seem harmless could be hurtful.

Smart said she would get defensive when people asked her why she didn't run or scream when her captors sometimes traveled with her out in the open. Smart was found nine months after her disappearance while walking with her kidnapers in a Salt Lake City suburb by people who recognized the couple from media reports.

As an adult she realized they didn't mean any harm, she said.

"My brain heard that question as: 'You should have tried harder. You should have run, you should have yelled, this is somehow your fault,'" Smart said. "So, I would just caution her community and anyone able to interact with her to really think about the questions they are asking her."

Beers and Smart said they are proof that trauma survivors can go on to live happy and fulfilling lives.

"It's never going to be easy, but with the correct support, the correct people to talk to and people there who love you, she's going to be able to survive and thrive," said Beers, who was raised by a foster family after her rescue because of abuse she had suffered within her own family before the kidnapping.

"They just surrounded me with love and gave me a normal home and that to me ... was the most important thing," Beers said.

It won't happen quickly, though, Bowers said, and people need to realize that Jayme will relive her trauma in different ways throughout her life — including if she forms romantic relationships or has children of her own.

"People tend to think, 'OK, it's been a year now, you should be fine,'" Bowers said. "You might learn to cope and deal with it, but it will never go away."

He said it's also important for Jayme to know that "anything you're thinking and feeling is normal. Don't be afraid of it; don't think there's something wrong with you. ... You're not the bad guy here."

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Smart said she would tell Jayme that “she is a survivor and she is a hero. She’s incredibly strong and incredibly brave and there’s so many people who love her and are in awe of her and who want to help her and support her in any way.

“And I would tell her that this experience might feel like it’s defining, it might feel like that’s who she is now, but it doesn’t have to be,” Smart said.

What’s more, she said, Jayme’s escape and rescue are “the reason why we can never give up hope on any missing child.”

McCombs reported from Salt Lake City.

For more stories on Jayme’s abduction and her parents’ deaths: <https://apnews.com/JaymeCloss>

Despite shutdown, almost 200 attend TSA Tennessee jobs event

By JONATHAN MATTISE, Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A day after its officers went without a paycheck for the first time during the government shutdown, the Transportation Security Administration drew in almost 200 people still interested in the airport security job during a fast-track hiring event Saturday in Tennessee.

Joshua Paders, a 31-year-old who attended the event, said he would still take a TSA position if he’s hired and the government remains shut down and he wouldn’t be getting a paycheck right away.

“It just shows that I’m willing to work, that I really want to do it,” said Paders, who said he’s worked in multiple security jobs and always viewed TSA as a good opportunity.

TSA Federal Security Director for Tennessee Stephen Wood said job hunters at the event like Paders didn’t really inquire about the shutdown, which has left 51,000 of the administration’s transportation-security officers working without pay because they are deemed essential employees. They expect to be made whole once the shutdown ends.

The administration is looking to hire dozens more officers at the booming Nashville International Airport, even as the ones they have make do without pay for now. Prospective officers that TSA chooses to hire from the jobs event could start working as full- or part-time officers within two to four weeks, Wood said. The hiring event was one of several in major cities in recent months, he added.

“Obviously, I think everybody knows that at some point, this will end. And we really haven’t gotten questions about that today,” Wood said of the shutdown. “Not a lot of people have come up to us to talk about that. They’re pretty much interested in getting a job.”

Applicants attended informational sessions, were interviewed to assess qualifications, took a computer-based test, and could schedule drug screenings and medical exams. They could apply online beforehand or onsite.

James Perry, 68, used to work as a state Department of Labor investigator for unemployment insurance. He said the timing is right for him to try to join TSA, regardless of the shutdown and the prospect of possible missed paychecks.

“I’m interested in what I can do moving forward,” Perry said. “The shutdown itself, I’m very sorry it happened and very sorry it’s affected so many people. But I want to get my career moving.”

Democrats roll out big health care proposals in the states

By SALLY HO and GEOFF MULVIHILL, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Riding the momentum from November’s elections, Democratic leaders in the states are wasting no time delivering on their biggest campaign promise — to expand access to health care and make it more affordable.

The first full week of state legislative sessions and swearings-in for governors saw a flurry of proposals. In his initial actions, newly elected California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced plans to expand Medicaid to those in the country illegally up to age 26, implement a mandate that everyone buy insurance or face a

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fine, and consolidate the state's prescription drug purchases in the hope that it will dramatically lower costs.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee proposed a public health insurance option for people who are not covered by Medicaid or private employers and have trouble affording policies on the private market.

Democrats in several states where they now control the legislature and governor's office, including New Mexico, are considering ways that people who are uninsured but make too much to qualify for Medicaid or other subsidized coverage can buy Medicaid policies.

And in the nation's most populous city, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a publicly run plan to link the uninsured, who already receive treatment in city hospitals, with primary care.

It's all in keeping with the main theme Democratic candidates promoted on the campaign trail in 2018.

They touted the benefits of former President Barack Obama's health overhaul — such as protections for people with pre-existing conditions, allowing young adults to remain on their parents' health insurance policies and expanded coverage options for lower-income Americans. At the same time, they painted Republicans as seeking to eliminate or greatly reduce health care options and protections.

"Once you give something to somebody, it's pretty hard to take it away, and I think we see that with how the support for the (Affordable Care Act) has grown over the last two years," said Washington House Rep. Eileen Cody, who is leading the state's public option proposal.

The actions also represent a pushback to steps taken by the Trump administration and congressional Republicans to undermine the Affordable Care Act.

The GOP tax law stripped away the individual mandate, which was intended to stabilize insurance markets by encouraging younger and healthier people to buy policies. And last summer, the Trump administration said it would freeze payments under an "Obamacare" program that protects insurers with sicker patients from financial losses. That move is expected to contribute to higher premiums.

The Democratic proposals fall short of providing universal health care, a goal of many Democrats but also an elusive one because of its cost. In recent years, California, Colorado and Vermont have all considered and then abandoned attempts to create state-run health care systems.

Still, many Democrats are eager to take steps that get them closer to that.

"This is not just a moral right," Inslee said in announcing his public option proposal this past week. "It is an economic wisdom, and this is very possible."

Some lawmakers in Colorado, where Democrats now control the legislature and the governor's office, are proposing a state-run health insurance plan similar to that announced by Inslee. It would reach those who don't qualify for federal assistance or who live in rural areas with few health care choices.

Both states plan to rely on their agencies that administer Medicaid, the state-federal program that provides health coverage for roughly one-in-five Americans. Republicans are skeptical about whether the states can afford it, since they already pick up a portion of Medicaid costs.

"This is about having the government competing in the private market. Medicare-for-all will be priced out," Washington state Rep. Joe Schmick said.

Taking incremental steps to increase coverage options and make health care more affordable may be a smarter strategy than pursuing a costly and complicated all-or-nothing proposal for universal coverage, said Katherine Hempstead, senior policy adviser at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"Everybody wants to pay less for health care," she said.

Democrats now have more leverage to experiment. Campaign messaging around health care helped them flip seven governor's seats to bolster their numbers to 23 across the country and win back several state legislative chambers. They gained full control of state government in several states, including New York and Nevada.

That power will allow them to consider health care expansions that Republicans have resisted.

In Nevada, for example, the state's Democratically controlled legislature passed a bill in 2017 that would have let anyone in the state buy into a Medicaid insurance plan, similar to the option being pushed in New Mexico. But former Gov. Brian Sandoval, a Republican, vetoed it.

The new governor, Democrat Steve Sisolak, is forming a committee to look at health care options, in-

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cluding the possibility of requiring everyone to have insurance. In addition to the California proposal, that mandate already is in place in Massachusetts and New Jersey, with Vermont following in 2020.

It's a similar dynamic in New Mexico, where Democratic lawmakers have talked for years about allowing people, including non-citizens, to buy into Medicaid if they cannot afford insurance any other way.

Colin Baillio, policy director for the advocacy group Health Action New Mexico, said a bill is being drafted with the goal of getting it adopted this year and implemented for 2020. The optimism comes because the new governor, Michelle Lujan Grisham, is a Democrat.

"Folks are going to need to have health care one way or another," he said. "We think health coverage is a good investment for our state."

Follow Sally Ho at https://twitter.com/_sallyho and Geoff Mulvihill at <https://twitter.com/geoffmulvihill>

Pence's pickle: How to bargain when no one speaks for Trump

By JILL COLVIN, LISA MASCARO and LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Progress made, said one.

Not so, said the other.

We'll meet again, said one.

Waste of time, said the other.

Such has been the life lately of Mike Pence, the loyal soldier dispatched by President Donald Trump to lead negotiations over the partial government shutdown .

The vice president has been one of the administration's most visible emissaries during the shutdown fight, meeting with lawmakers, sitting for interviews and leading staff-level talks. But he's been repeatedly — and very publicly — undermined and contradicted by his boss, who's demanding billions from Congress to build a wall along the southern border.

Lawmakers and aides in both parties say it's become increasingly clear that, in this White House, no one speaks for the president but himself, leaving Pence in an all-but-impossible position as he tries to negotiate on Trump's behalf.

"He doesn't really have the authority to make a deal," said Republican Rep. Mike Simpson of Idaho, who worked alongside Pence back when Pence was a member of Congress. He said legislators respect the vice president even if he is just "the messenger." But he adds: "Trump is the one who's going to say 'yes' or 'no.'"

Even before the shutdown began, Pence was in an awkward spot in the wall debate — quite literally. When Trump hosted then-incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer at a heated Oval Office meeting in December that ended with the president saying he'd be "proud" to own a government shutdown, a stone-faced Pence sat by, speechless in his chair, drawing quips on social media comparing him to a statue or the "Elf on the Shelf."

Trump later sent Pence to lead a weekend of budget talks with staff for Republican and Democratic congressional leaders, an effort that Democrats dismissed as little more than a public-relations effort by the White House to give the impression it was working to end the impasse. Some also saw Pence's meetings with legislative staffers as unbecoming of his title.

When the first negotiation session ended that Saturday, Pence tweeted: "Productive discussion."

An hour later, Trump countered: "Not much headway made."

The next morning, as Pence was set to return to the negotiating table, Trump again threw cold water on the effort.

"I don't expect to have anything happen at that meeting ... nor does the vice president," Trump told reporters. "Ultimately, it's going to be solved by the principals."

Allies of the vice president minimized the significance of the comments and the White House denied any friction.

"The vice president has been very effective in communicating on behalf of the administration," said White

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House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders. "He has been in lock step with the president throughout the entire process."

Pence, too, rejected the idea that he'd been undermined by the president or had difficulty building trust on Capitol Hill because of Trump's tendency to change his mind.

He described to reporters an offer he brought to Schumer from the president on the Saturday before Christmas to try to cut a deal.

"I didn't have any impression that whole week that they doubted that it was a legitimate offer," said Pence. He would not confirm the details, but it was understood to have lowered the president's demand for \$5.7 billion to build the wall to \$2.5 billion.

Democrats panned the offer.

Days later, Trump rejected it, too,

"No, not 2.5," Trump told reporters. "We're asking for 5.6. And, you know, somebody said 2.5. No."

With negotiations now at a standstill, Pence has been a frequent visitor to the Capitol, focused on trying to keep jittery Republicans from breaking with Trump.

The vice president is well known in Congress, having climbed the ladder as the leader of a conservative faction to serve as chairman of the House GOP conference before running for governor of Indiana. That background was among the reasons Trump, who arrived in Washington with no government experience, chose Pence as his running mate.

Marc Lotter, a former Pence spokesman who remains an outside adviser, said Pence "often gets called in if we're getting close to the finish line to see if we can bring in a couple of last votes" or hold onto those who may be wavering. He recalled Pence, during a health care fight, "working back and forth, taking ideas and trying to find areas where there could be agreement, looking for areas where there could be compromise."

While Pence lacks the personal relationships with Schumer and Pelosi that some of his predecessors had with opposition leaders— notably Vice President Joe Biden's relationship with Senate Republicans — Lotter said Pence meets regularly with members of both parties and both chambers, hosting lawmakers at his residence for regular dinners.

Marc Short, the former White House director of legislative affairs who previously served as Pence's chief of staff, said the vice president's measured manner has been a "complement" to Trump's very different style.

He pointed to efforts during the "Obamacare" repeal effort to sway Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, known for taking her time to weigh decisions. Pence worked patiently to answer her questions.

Indeed, "listener" was a word that came up often when lawmakers were asked to describe Pence.

"He's a good listener," said Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio. "Which is a rare quality around here."

"He tells us exactly what he thinks," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "He's a good listener. He takes our messages back to the president."

But Simpson questioned whether that's what is needed.

Pence, said the Idaho Republican, is "a relayer. We need to have a negotiator ... someone who has the authority to go in and negotiate. And then someone who has the ability to go to Trump and say this is the best we can do."

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>
Follow Colvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

GOP rejected Obama's executive reach, but accepts Trump's

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama stunned Republicans when he bypassed Congress and, relying on what he called his pen and his phone, used executive powers to enact his agenda, including protecting millions of young immigrants from deportation.

Now, with President Donald Trump proposing an even more dramatic end-run around Congress to build

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his promised border wall with Mexico, many Republicans are uneasily cheering him on.

The potential use of a national emergency declaration by Trump for the border wall shows the extent to which the party is willing to yield on treasured values — in this case, the constitutional separation of powers — to steer clear of confronting the White House and give the president what he wants.

It's a different accommodation from just a few years ago. Then Republicans often called out Obama as overstepping his authority in using executive actions when Congress failed to act on White House priorities. They complained about Obama as "king," "emperor" or "tyrant."

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., a leader of the House Freedom Caucus, said most conservatives would go along with Trump's decision to declare a national emergency as "the last tool in the tool box" for building the wall.

"Does the president have the right and the ability to do it? Yes. Would most of us prefer a legislative option? Yes," Meadows told reporters this week. "Most conservatives want it to be the last resort he would use. But those same conservatives, I'm sure, if it's deployed, would embrace him as having done all he could do to negotiate with Democrats."

Other Republicans say Trump has few options left after talks broke down at the White House over his long-promised border wall.

"This is not something you would want to do," said Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia, now the top Republican on the Judiciary Committee.

"But we've been put into this position," he said. "The Democrats are forcing him into a choice of doing the national emergency because they won't sit down and discuss it."

On Saturday, the partial government shutdown will stretch in its 22nd day and Trump's plans for ending the stalemate are shifting yet again.

Trump indicated he was slowing what had appeared to be momentum toward the national emergency declaration as the way out of the stalemate. Invoking the power would allow him to tap unspent Defense funds to build the long-promised wall along the border that was central to his presidential campaign.

On the campaign trail, the president often said at rallies that Mexico would pay for the wall. But Mexico has refused forcing Trump to ask Congress for the money instead. Trump walked out of negotiations this week when Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democrats refused to give, saying they support dollars for border security just not the big wall Trump envisions. They call the wall ineffective and say it's a symbol that does not reflect the nation's values.

After having talked for days about invoking the national emergency power to unleash the funds, the president hit pause Friday. "I'm not going to do it so fast," Trump said during an event Friday at the White House.

Experts have said even though the president may have the authority to invoke powers under the 1976 National Emergencies Act, using it will almost certainly bring on a court battle. The courts did not allow President Harry Truman to nationalize the U.S. steel industry during the Korean War.

Moreover, they say, it could lead the country into uncharted areas. Declaring an emergency could give the president access to many other powers, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

"The president thinks that he can do whatever he wants by declaring something a national emergency," said Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii who serves on the Judiciary Committee. "I think it's a very dangerous thing."

But what cuts to the core of the concern on Capitol Hill is the executive branch wading into legislative domain to shift money Congress has already approved to the wall.

The constitution provides the Congress, not the White House, the power of the purse, and lawmakers are not eager to cede their role to the president, even for a wall many Republicans support.

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill objected to the administration eyeing shifting unspent disaster funding Congress approved last year for Army Corps of Engineer projects to help hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, Texas and other areas to pay for the wall. By Friday, lawmakers said they were being told those projects will not be touched and the White House was now looking for other funds to pay for the border wall.

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Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, part of the GOP leadership, said at a forum Friday in Austin that the lawmakers "worked very hard to make sure that the victims of Hurricane Harvey - their concerns are addressed and Texas is able to rebuild."

He said, "I will tell you that I will oppose any reprogramming of Harvey disaster funds."

Republican Richard Shelby of Alabama, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, acknowledged the dilemma, especially as the shutdown continues with no end in sight.

Trump invoking a national emergency "might break an impasse and it needs to be broken one way or another," Shelby said as the Senate adjourned. But he prefers a negotiated settlement with Congress. "I'm still hoping we'll have a breakthrough, but right now I don't see one."

Follow Mascaro on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/lisamascaro>

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Granddad: Wisconsin girl has no link to suspected kidnapper

By TODD RICHMOND, Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The grandfather of a northwestern Wisconsin girl who authorities say was abducted during a home invasion that left her parents dead said Saturday that the family has no connection to the suspect and doesn't understand why he targeted her, deepening a mystery that has captivated the state for months.

Someone blasted open the door of James and Denise Closs' home near Barron with a shotgun in October, gunned the couple down and made off with their 13-year-old daughter, Jayme Closs.

Jayme had been missing for nearly three months Thursday when she approached a stranger near the small, isolated north woods town of Gordon and pleaded for help. Officers arrested 21-year-old Jake Thomas Patterson minutes later based on Jayme's description of his vehicle. He was jailed on suspicion of kidnapping and homicide.

Investigators have said Patterson's goal was to kidnap Jayme, but he appears to have no connection to the family. Jayme's grandfather Robert Naiberg said in a telephone interview Saturday that the only thing the family knows for sure is that no one knew Patterson. He said Jayme told FBI agents she didn't know him at all.

"He didn't know Jayme, he didn't know Denise or Jim," Naiberg said. "(Jayme) don't know him from Adam. (But) he knew what he was doing. We don't know if he was stalking her or what. Did he see her somewhere?"

Patterson attorneys Charles Glynn and Richard Jones said in a statement they consider the situation "very tragic" and that they are relying on the court system to treat their client fairly. Charges are expected against Patterson on Monday, when he is expected to make his initial appearance in court.

The news that Jayme was safe set off joy and relief in her hometown of Barron, population 3,300 and about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from where she was found. The discovery ended an all-out search that gripped the state, with many people fearing the worst the longer she was missing.

Jayme's aunt, Jennifer Smith, posted on Facebook Saturday that Jayme was doing well.

"Jayme had a pretty good night sleep it was great to know she was next to me all night what a great feeling to have her home. As a family we will get through all of the healing process Jayme has. It will be a long road but we are family strong and we love this little girl so much!!"

Another aunt, Sue Naiberg Allard, posted that Jayme got "the most awaited hug ever" when she returned home.

Jayme told one of the neighbors in Gordon who took her in that she had walked away from a cabin where she had been held captive.

"She said that this person's name was Jake Patterson, 'he killed my parents and took me,'" said another neighbor, Kristin Kasinskas. "She did not talk about why or how. She said she did not know him."

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Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said investigators are trying to figure out what happened to Jayme during her captivity and why she was seized, and gave no details on how she escaped except to say Patterson was not home at the time. He said there is no evidence Patterson knew Jayme or her family or had been in contact with her on social media.

"I know all of you are searching for the answer why any of this happened," Fitzgerald said. "Believe me, so are we."

The sheriff said he didn't know whether Jayme had been physically abused.

Patterson took measures to avoid leaving evidence at the scene, including shaving his head beforehand, and a shotgun was recovered from the home where Jayme was believed held, Fitzgerald said.

Property records show that the cabin belonged to Patterson's father at the time of Jayme's disappearance.

The cabin is in Eau Claire Acres, a development about 10 miles (16 kilometers) outside the tiny town of Gordon, nestled in the dense evergreen forests of northwestern Wisconsin that are popular with vacationers in the summer and snowmobilers and ATV riders in the winter. Law enforcement barricades blocked the road leading to the property Saturday.

Naiberg, Jayme's grandfather, said he spent a few hours with her on Friday. No one pressed her to talk, he said, adding that FBI agents and doctors advised them to let her speak when she's ready. He said she was largely silent and did not talk about how Patterson had kept her confined.

Patterson, who was unemployed, remained largely an enigma Saturday.

He has no criminal record, the sheriff said. He worked for one day in 2016 at the same Jennie-O turkey plant in Barron as Jayme's parents. But the sheriff said it did not appear Patterson interacted with the couple during his brief time there.

Over the past few months, detectives pursued thousands of tips, watched dozens of surveillance videos and conducted numerous searches for Jayme, including one that drew 2,000 volunteers but yielded no clues.

In November, the sheriff said he kept similar cases in the back of his mind as he worked to find Jayme, including the abduction of Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 when she was taken from her Salt Lake City home in 2002. Smart was rescued nine months later after witnesses recognized her abductors on an "America's Most Wanted" episode.

For more stories on Jayme's abduction and her parents' deaths: <https://apnews.com/JaymeCloss>

For The Latest updates: <https://bit.ly/2VMnpXU>

Associated Press writers Jeff Baenen in Barron, Wisconsin; Amy Forliti in Gordon, Wisconsin; Gretchen Ehlike in Milwaukee; and Brady McCombs in Salt Lake City contributed to this report.

Inslee pitches to Nevada outside 2020 spotlight on DC

By **BILL BARROW** and **MICHELLE L. PRICE**, Associated Press

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — The Democratic presidential sweepstakes might seem like a tale of Joe Biden and the Seven Senators, but there are plenty of governors and mayors looking for a chance to steal the spotlight from the former vice president and other headliners.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee pitched his progressive record during a visit Saturday to the early caucus state of Nevada and recounted how he challenged the president when Trump suggested arming teachers in the wake of school shootings last year.

"I looked him in the eye and said, 'You know what, you've got to do less tweeting and more listening to teachers,'" Inslee said.

"He cannot stop us," Inslee said, adding "He has not stopped me either."

Inslee will soon travel to the first primary state of New Hampshire as he mulls a White House bid.

Terry McAuliffe, a former Virginia governor and longtime Democratic power player, is showing up on

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cable news and writing newspaper opinion columns.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Montana Gov. Steve Bullock are busy with day jobs but recently finished an ambitious round of midterm campaigning. Former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper left office this month, and he spent part of the fall on the road.

Billionaire and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg says he'd fund his own race if he runs. Even Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, is making noise.

And San Antonio, former Obama housing chief Julian Castro kicked off his campaign Saturday in his hometown.

Each person is making moves that could result in a presidential campaign. But in the early days of a Democratic primary, the question is whether someone without a Washington resume can win a contest that's so far dominated by Biden, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke and several nationally known senators, including Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Kamala Harris of California, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

Other senators who might join the race include Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota.

"Being an outsider governor or an outsider mayor is a good place to run from to cast yourself as somebody with executive experience and leadership at a time when people don't trust a dysfunctional Congress," said Dave Hamrick, who managed former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley's unsuccessful bid in 2016.

"The challenge," Hamrick said, "is figuring out whether your story is the right one for this moment and selling it when so many other people are out there."

For now, Inslee is the most publicly active of the governors. In North Las Vegas, he cited his record on climate change, gun control, the minimum wage and paid family leave in an appearance at the Battle Born Progress convention. He said addressing climate change is "the first and foremost obligation" facing the country and that he expects recreational use of marijuana to eventually be legalized in all states.

Under a large American flag, Inslee paced the stage with a microphone as he said he represented "the real Washington," and told activists who could be in 2020 that he felt "kinship" with them.

The 67-year-old governor and former congressman told The Associated Press in an interview after that he hasn't made a decision about whether to run for president but "it won't be month away." Inslee said he's talking to potential staff and traveling to talk with Democrats around the country, but there's "no litmus test or pivot point" that his decision hinges on.

Campaign finance laws give nonfederal officials more leeway to raise money without having an official presidential campaign or exploratory committee, so there's less pressure on them to announce campaigns than for senators who want to travel.

If those governors and mayors announce early and then fail to show fundraising prowess, their campaigns could be short-lived. But if they wait too long, they could lose out on media attention, donors and key staffers.

The sweet spot will be qualifying for the first party-sponsored debate in June. Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez hasn't yet announced debate qualification rules.

Inslee is traveling now using his federal political action committee.

Garcetti's PAC raised \$2.6 million for Democrats last year. He brought in \$100,000 each for several state parties, including early voting states, and he recently hired the former executive director of the Democratic Party in South Carolina, which holds the South's first primary.

Bullock, a former DGA chairman like Inslee, traveled extensively in 2018 but now is dedicated to his state's legislative session. His national advisers include Jen Palmieri, a former communications director to the Obama White House and Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign.

In Colorado, Hickenlooper opened a federal political action committee last fall and has made some top staff hires.

McAuliffe, who is also a former DNC chairman, is in contact with his old network of donors and aides; he has the personal wealth to pay for some of his own early travel.

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Besides competing for money and staff, Hamrick said, candidates will have to choose their “lanes” — political identities that make them stand out.

Bullock can be the 52-year-old white governor who mixes his Ivy League education with his Montana roots. McAuliffe, the 61-year-old former Virginia governor, can be the establishment liberal who restored felon voting rights and pushed Medicaid expansion but who warns against a “federal jobs guarantee” and “free college tuition.”

Inslee told the AP on Saturday that if he runs, he wants to focus his message on climate change and “family-oriented, working people policies” that benefit the economy, like paid family leave.

Barrow reported from Atlanta.

Follow the reporters on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and <https://twitter.com/michelleprice>

French yellow vest protests hit 9th week, clash with police

By SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Thousands of yellow vest protesters marched Saturday through Paris and other French cities for a ninth straight weekend to denounce President Emmanuel Macron’s economic policies, and repeated tensions broke out with police.

Sporadic violence broke out during protests in Paris, Bourges, Bordeaux, Rouen, Marseille and Toulouse. Protesters walked peacefully through central Paris from the Finance Ministry in the east of the French capital to the Arc de Triomphe in the west.

Scuffles between police and activists then broke out near the monument at the end of the march. Police used tear gas, water cannon and flash-balls to push back some people throwing rocks and other objects at them.

French security forces equipped with armored vehicles blocked protesters from going onto nearby Champs-Elysees Avenue. The neighborhood was reopened to car traffic later Saturday evening.

The Interior Ministry said more than 100 people had been arrested in Paris and other French cities, including 82 who were kept in police custody, primarily for carrying potential weapons or taking part in violence.

The movement demanding wider changes to France’s economy to help struggling workers appeared to gain new momentum this weekend. The French Interior Ministry said about 32,000 people turned out for yellow vest demonstrations across France at midday.

Several thousand protesters marched in the central city of Bourges, a provincial capital with a renowned Gothic cathedral and picturesque wood-framed houses.

French authorities deployed 80,000 security forces nationwide for the anti-government protests and Interior Minister Christophe Castaner threatened tough retaliation against any who rioted.

Paris police deployed armored vehicles, horses and attack dogs around the city on Saturday. Subway stations and some shops closed, notably around government buildings and the Champs-Elysees, the sparkling avenue whose luxury boutiques have been hit by repeated rioting in past protests.

The movement for greater economic equality waned over the holidays but appears to be resurging, despite Macron’s promises of billions of euros in tax relief and an upcoming “national debate” to address demonstrators’ concerns that Macron is expected to launch with a “letter to the French” on Monday.

The protests started in November with drivers who opposed fuel tax increases, which is why participants wear the fluorescent vests that French motorists must keep in their vehicles. But it has mushroomed into a broad-based revolt against years of shrinking purchasing power and Macron’s pro-business policies.

Some yellow vest groups hope to translate that anger into votes in the European Parliament elections in May.

Angela Charlton and Milos Krivokapic contributed to this report.

McCarrick accuser cooperates with NYC prosecutors on abuse

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The key accuser in the sex abuse case against ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick has met with New York City prosecutors, evidence that the scandal that has convulsed the papacy is now part of the broader U.S. law enforcement investigation into sex abuse and cover-up in the Catholic Church.

James Grein gave testimony last month to Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Sara Sullivan, who is investigating a broad range of issues related to clergy abuse and the systematic cover-up by church superiors, Grein's attorney, Patrick Noaker, told The Associated Press.

The development is significant, given that the Vatican investigation against McCarrick has already created a credibility crisis for the Catholic hierarchy including Pope Francis, since it was apparently an open secret that McCarrick slept with adult seminarians. Grein's testimony, however, includes allegations that McCarrick, a former family friend, also groomed and abused him starting when he was 11.

The Manhattan District Attorney's office launched a hotline last year and invited victims to report even decades-old sex abuse, saying it would pursue "any and all investigative leads" to ensure justice.

Grein met with Sullivan before Christmas after filing a compensation claim with the New York City archdiocese alleging that McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington, first exposed himself when Grein was 11 and continued abusing him for some two decades, including during confession, Noaker said. The church's compensation procedures require that victims notify the district attorney of their allegations, which Grein did on Nov. 1.

Noaker, however, said Grein's testimony to Sullivan went beyond the required pro forma notification and covered issues related to a broader investigation.

On Dec. 27, Grein testified to Vatican investigators as part of the Holy See's internal probe against McCarrick. That investigation has now finished and shifted to Rome, where a final verdict is expected within weeks, Vatican officials say.

McCarrick, who has also been accused by two other men in the Vatican investigation, faces possible defrocking if Francis determines the accusations against him are credible.

Criminal charges in New York City against McCarrick are unlikely for any actual abuse, due to the statute of limitations, Noaker said. But Grein's testimony could still prove useful as prosecutors investigate patterns of abuse, conspiracy and cover-up over decades by Catholic leaders.

A law enforcement official familiar with the New York City investigation said it was separate from the one announced in September by then-New York State Attorney General Barbara Underwood, who subpoenaed all eight dioceses in New York state. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation.

Underwood, who has since been replaced, took action along with prosecutors in a dozen U.S. states after a Pennsylvania grand jury alleged that more than 1,000 children were molested by 300 priests over 70 years in six dioceses of that state alone.

The state attorney general's office is pursuing a civil investigation but has also reached out to local prosecutors authorized to convene grand juries or pursue criminal investigations.

Separately, the U.S. Justice Department has told every Catholic diocese in the country not to destroy documents or confidential archives relating to abuse investigations and the transfers of priests.

McCarrick was ordained a priest in New York City in 1958 and served as an auxiliary bishop to New York's then-Cardinal Terence Cooke before being named bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey, in 1981. It was during his years as a New York City priest — in the early 1970s — that he allegedly groped a teenage altar boy in St. Patrick's Cathedral. That accusation launched the internal church investigation.

After the New York City archdiocese found the accusation credible and announced that McCarrick had been removed from public ministry, Grein and former seminarians came forward to say that McCarrick molested them as well. Francis removed McCarrick as a cardinal in July.

McCarrick denied the initial groping allegation of the altar boy and has said, through his lawyer, that he looks forward to his right to due process.

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A former priest from the Metuchen diocese, Robert Ciolek, has also publicly accused McCarrick of inappropriate behavior while he was a seminarian and formalized the accusation in a 2004 complaint to Pittsburgh church officials.

In the past week, the archdioceses of Pittsburgh and Washington confirmed that then-Pittsburgh Bishop Donald Wuerl forwarded the complaint to the Vatican embassy at the time — disproving Wuerl's claim that he hadn't heard of allegations against McCarrick until last year.

Francis recently accepted the resignation of now-Cardinal Wuerl as archbishop of Washington after his credibility suffered as a result of the McCarrick scandal and allegations about his tenure in Pittsburgh in the Pennsylvania grand jury report.

AP writer Michael Sisak contributed from New York.

3 dead, dozens injured in Paris bakery gas leak explosion

By ANGELA CHARLTON and SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A powerful explosion apparently caused by a gas leak blew apart a Paris bakery on Saturday and devastated the street it was on, killing three people and injuring dozens as it blasted out windows and overturned nearby cars, French authorities said.

Witnesses described the sound of the explosion as deafening. Firefighters pulled injured victims out from broken windows and evacuated residents and tourists as a fire raged and smoke billowed over Rue de Trevisé in the 9th arrondissement of north-central Paris.

Charred debris and broken glass covered the pavement around the apartment building housing the bakery, which resembled a blackened carcass, and people were trapped inside nearby buildings.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner paid homage to the courage of rescuers, who saved the life of one firefighter who was buried under the rubble for 2½ hours.

The French Interior Ministry said two firefighters and a female Spanish tourist were killed by the blast and about 10 of the 47 wounded were in critical condition. French authorities corrected the figure of four dead given earlier by France's interior minister.

Paris prosecutor Remy Heitz said the cause of the blast appeared to be an accidental gas leak. He said Paris firefighters were already at the scene to investigate a suspected gas leak at the bakery when the explosion happened about 9 a.m.

Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell tweeted that "I deeply regret the death of three people after the explosion in central Paris, including a Spanish woman." He shared condolences to her relatives and "wishes for a quick recovery to the other injured Spaniard."

The Spanish newspaper El País reported the woman was a tourist staying in a hotel near the bakery, which is around the corner from the Folies-Bergere theater and not far from the Paris shopping district that includes the famed headquarters of Galeries Lafayette.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo extended a "message of affection and solidarity" to the victims. She said many residents and tourists had been evacuated from neighboring buildings and hotels and Paris authorities were helping to provide them temporary accommodations.

Authorities said around 200 firefighters and police were involved in the operation. A helicopter evacuated the wounded. Silver-helmeted firefighters and red firetrucks filled the street and inspected adjoining courtyards.

Pedro Goncalves, an employee at the Hotel Mercure opposite the bakery, said he saw firefighters enter the bakery in the morning but he and his co-workers "thought maybe it's a joke, a false alarm," and they went back to work.

About an hour later, he said a blast rocked the surrounding streets, one so powerful that he felt a whistling in his ears.

"I heard one big explosion and then a lot of pressure came at me, a lot of black smoke and glass," he said. "I had just enough time to get down and cover myself and protect my head."

Goncalves, who was struck by shattered glass, had cuts on his head and spots of blood on his sweater and undershirt. He ran for the exit and then went back to check on the hotel's clients, adding that some of them had head injuries and were bleeding. He said the hotel was "destroyed" in the blast.

"Thank God I'm OK," he said.

Another witness told The Associated Press that she was awakened by the blast and feared it was another terrorist attack.

The explosion came as the French capital was on edge and under heavy security for yellow vest protests Saturday against economic inequality. Authorities said 32,000 protesters took to the streets around the country.

Oleg Cetinic, Milos Krivokapic, Mstyslav Chernov in Paris, and Frank Griffiths and Nishit Morsawala in London, contributed to this report.

Shutdown puts strain on hundreds of Native American tribes

By **FELICIA FONSECA**, Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Fallout from the federal government shutdown is hurting Native Americans as dwindling funds hamper access to health care and other services. The pain is especially deep in tribal communities with high rates of poverty and unemployment, where one person often supports an extended family.

The effects were being felt far and wide.

In New Mexico, a lone police officer patrolled a Native American reservation larger in size than Houston on a shift that normally has three people, responding to multiple car wrecks during a snow storm, emergency calls and requests for welfare checks.

Elsewhere, federally funded road maintenance programs are operating with skeleton crews and struggling to keep roads clear on remote reservations. Tribal members said they can't get referrals for specialty care from the Indian Health Service if their conditions aren't life-threatening.

Native American tribes rely heavily on funding guaranteed by treaties with the U.S., acts of Congress and other agreements for public safety, social services, education and health care for their members. Because of the shutdown, tribal officials say some programs are on the brink of collapse and others are surviving with tribes filling funding gaps.

About 9,000 Indian Health Service employees, or 60 percent, are working without pay and 35 percent are working with funding streams not affected by the shutdown, according to the Health and Human Services department's shutdown plan. That includes staff providing direct care to patients. The agency delivers health care to about 2.2 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

The agency gets money from the Interior Department, whose budget is snared by the shutdown. For many tribal members, IHS is the only option for health care unless they want to pay out of pocket or have other insurance. Benefits under programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are unaffected by the partial government shutdown.

Much administrative work at IHS has come to a halt, and while most of it doesn't have an immediate effect on health care delivery, some patients were experiencing delays.

Clara Pratte's 68-year-old mother had surgery to clear up vision in one of her eyes earlier this month, but the Navajo woman wasn't able to get a referral from IHS for a follow-up appointment after pressure built up in her eye.

"We're managing, but it's a matter of when the government might open again to have it evaluated by a specialist," Pratte said.

In Washington state, the Seattle Indian Health Board plans to cut services if the federal shutdown continues more than a week or two. Endangered programs include an in-patient treatment center for chemical dependency and a traditional medicine program that incorporates a sweat lodge, storytelling and drumming to help people in recovery, government affairs officer Aren Sparck said.

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About one-fourth of the organization's funding comes from IHS, he said.

IHS spokesman Joshua Barnett said tribal health programs and ones in urban areas can continue operating, but the agency cannot fund them during the shutdown.

Leaders of Native American organizations wrote to Congress on Thursday describing the impact the shutdown is having on their communities, including on education, housing programs, child welfare and economic development.

"The long-term effects of this shutdown will ripple throughout our communities for months or even years following the reopening of the government," read the letter released by the National Congress of American Indians.

Michelle Begay was furloughed in late December from her administrative job with IHS and said she cannot seek work in the same field under the agency's regulations.

She doesn't know how she will pay for her daughter's parking pass for college or a plane ticket to Chicago to see her son graduate from a Naval academy next month without dipping into her savings. If she does, she risks not being able to cover her house payment and utilities beyond January.

Begay also had applied for health insurance through her employer before the new year to avoid high deductibles on her husband's plan, but the paperwork didn't get processed because of the shutdown. She recently paid \$600 to be seen for bronchitis but couldn't cover the costs when she was hit with a second bout. She went to an IHS clinic after calling for three days to get an appointment.

"I was very fortunate, my situation was treatable," she said. "My lung didn't collapse, that's what they were really concerned about. But, still, I had to wait two, almost three days to be seen."

Another federal agency serving Native Americans, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, was expected to furlough nearly 2,300 of its roughly 4,060 workers, according to its contingency plan. An agency spokeswoman didn't respond to messages left by The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, tribal communities were trying to help furloughed workers.

The Mescalero Apache in south-central New Mexico was offering people jobs at its casino and ski lodge. The Navajo Nation's power company says it will work with any furloughed employees struggling to pay their bills.

With the shutdown now entering its third week, the strain on the tribes was expected to increase.

Gabe Aguilar, the Mescalero Apache vice president, said a late December winter storm dumped more than three feet of snow on the mountainous reservation. The BIA runs the police force there, furloughing much of the staff and limiting the ability to respond to calls, Aguilar said.

In one instance, concerned relatives of an elderly man asked police to check on him because they couldn't get out of their own driveway, Aguilar said. By the time authorities reached his house, Aguilar said the man had died. He stopped short of blaming the federal shutdown.

"I don't want to get into a finger-pointing contest because right now, everyone is grieving," he said. "It did happen, though, an elder passed away. It's hard, it's a hard job and I wouldn't want to say what could've been."

Democratic members of Congress, including U.S. Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico and Rep. Sharice Davids of Kansas, have cited the man's death as an example of the impacts felt across Indian Country.

"Every day the president continues to treat tribal health and public safety programs like hostages for political gain endangers families across Indian Country," Udall said this week on the Senate floor.

Javier Kinney, executive director of the Yurok Tribe in northwestern California, said the tribe is about 90 percent funded through federal grants and is stretching its budget and using financial reserves to provide services to its 6,200 members. He said the tribe will have to cut workers' hours or furlough them if the funding isn't restored soon.

"Democrats and Republicans shouldn't look at it as a partisan issue in regards to tribal relations or tribal affairs," he said. "It's just the right thing to do."

Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Technology brings images of Holocaust survivors to life

By JAMIE STENGLE, Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Max Glauben was 17 and had already lost his mother, father and brother at the hands of the Nazis when U.S. troops rescued him while he was on a death march from one German concentration camp to another.

The recollections of the Dallas resident who as a Jew in Poland survived the Warsaw Ghetto and Nazi concentration camps are now being preserved in a way that will allow generations to come to ask his image questions. Glauben, who turns 91 on Monday, is the latest Holocaust survivor recorded in such a way by the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation . The Los Angeles-based foundation has recorded 18 interactive testimonies with Holocaust survivors over the last several years, and executive director Stephen Smith says they're in a "race against time" as they work to add more, seeking both a diversity in experiences and testimonies in a variety of languages.

"I thought that my knowledge could cure the hatred and the bigotry and the killings in this world if somebody can listen to my story, my testimony, and be educated even after I'm gone," Glauben said.

Smith says that while the foundation founded in 1994 by film director Steven Spielberg has about 55,000 audiovisual testimonies about genocides in dozens of languages — the majority from the Holocaust — the interactive technology stands out for allowing museumgoers to have a dialogue with survivors.

"It's your questions that are being answered," Smith said, adding that the replies, especially on weighty issues like forgiveness can be especially poignant. He says, "You actually see sometimes them struggling to know what to answer."

So far, the foundation has Holocaust survivors speaking in English, Hebrew and Spanish, and the group hopes to get people speaking in even more languages.

"It's so powerful when it's in your mother tongue and you're looking the person in the eye and you are hearing nuanced language coming back that's your own language," Smith said.

For more than a year now, the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center has featured the survivors' images in a special theater . Museum CEO Susan Abrams says that when visitors interact with the images , the impact is often obvious: "People get teary; people laugh."

"Our audience comes to feel that they know these survivors somewhat intimately because they're having small group conversation, and in that moment, pretty much everything else fades away," Abrams said.

The Illinois museum is one of four currently featuring the images. Other museums are in Houston , Indiana and New York . The Holocaust museum in Dallas will start showing them starting in September, after it opens in a new location and with a new name — the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum.

The Dallas museum currently brings in survivors to talk to students and has found that's often the most meaningful part of their visit, according to President and CEO Mary Pat Higgins. This technology ensures that can continue, she said.

"Our survivors are aging, and so in 20 years we won't have any survivors who are still able to do that themselves," she said.

Smith said the images can appear on a flat screen or be projected in a way that appears to be three-dimensional. Like Illinois, Dallas is building a special theater so the image will appear three-dimensional on a stage.

Smith said the technology involved is simpler than many people think.

"It's actually video that responds to human voice commands," he said. "And all that's happening is rather than you watching a linear testimony, all the bits of the testimony are broken up, and then when you ask it a question it finds that piece of video and plays it for you."

JT Buzanga, assistant curator at the Holocaust Museum Houston, said the uniqueness of the interactive testimonies gives visitors a reason to return.

"It's something that makes the connection that people want to remember and want to come back," Buzanga said.

Glauben, who has made it his mission to tell people about the Holocaust, helped found the Dallas museum. He says that after he lost his family, he told himself he would "do anything possible to educate the people and let them know what kind of tragedy this was."

Bare-handed surgeries as Zimbabwe's health system collapses

By FARAI MUTSAKA, Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — A doctors' strike in Zimbabwe has crippled a health system that was already in intensive care from neglect. It mirrors the state of affairs in a country that was full of promise a year ago with the departure of longtime leader Robert Mugabe but now faces economic collapse.

Doctors describe grim conditions: Bare-handed surgeries. Plastic bread bags used to collect patients' urine. Broken-down machines. Zimbabwe's health sector, once considered one of the best in Africa, is on its knees.

"It's so sad. The hospitals are empty, the patients are being turned away to die somewhere else," said Prince Butau, treasurer of the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association, which represents about 1,000 doctors who anchor government hospitals.

A new president's promises of change have turned out to be empty.

"Affordable quality health care guaranteed," read campaign billboards for President Emmerson Mnangagwa, a former Mugabe protege, ahead of the July 2018 election. Six months after he narrowly won the disputed vote, Zimbabwe's health sector has widespread shortages of basic medicines such as painkillers and contraceptives.

Mnangagwa and others in the country's political and economic elite receive medical care mainly in neighboring South Africa, while Mugabe frequently visits Singapore for treatment.

At home, everyday Zimbabweans seeking health care have had to bring their own drugs, syringes, bandages and, at times, water.

Government hospitals were paralyzed by the five-week doctors' strike that "begrudgingly" sputtered to an end on Thursday with no resolution for their demands. The end brings no improvement in conditions.

In November, the Zimbabwe Medical Association, which represents health workers, warned that patients were "relapsing" and "deteriorating" while operations were being cancelled due to shortages of medicines.

The situation, coupled with low salaries, forced doctors to strike, Butau said.

Without adequate gloves, doctors sometimes use their bare hands while masks and goggles are nonexistent, he said. "We are exposed to fluids, blood spillage, HIV and hepatitis B."

He has seen rope used in place of bandages. "We cannot keep on doing that," he said.

One of the striking doctors, Wallace Hlambelo, described using everyday plastic bags with catheters for some elderly patients. "What we were doing was not to treat patients. Patients feel you have done something but you would have done nothing. That's not medicine," he said.

Early this month, Mnangagwa cut short his annual leave to help resolve the doctors' strike. The problem may widen after the Apex Council, which represents all government workers, on Tuesday gave notice to strike if Zimbabwe's government fails to pay salaries in U.S. dollars.

The government has said it cannot afford to pay in dollars, Zimbabwe's de facto currency. Many government workers are paid in quickly devaluing electronic money instead, forcing them to tap the black market at risk of arrest.

At government hospitals, the situation has been desperate.

At Parirenyatwa Hospital, the largest in Zimbabwe, the usually busy corridors were silent when The Associated Press visited on Monday. In the pediatric section, beds were empty while other wards were barely occupied as the hospital, like others, only accepted the direst of cases.

Patients began to trickle in after some doctors returned, but on the day the strike ended, one family at Parirenyatwa said they were collecting the body of their son and blamed his death on the strike. They carried his coffin out to a waiting truck.

Poor funding is a major cause of the health system's collapse, said Itai Rusike, director of Community

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Working Group on Health, a non-governmental organization.

Zimbabwe's finance minister has allocated \$694 million for the health sector in 2019 against an annual need of \$1.3 billion. To return the sector to its former glory days, the health ministry said it needs about \$8 billion, which is the entire government budget for 2019.

The burden falls on impoverished patients.

"The hospital has nothing but we are running out of money because the pharmacies are demanding U.S. dollars," said Nobert Nzonzo, who accompanied his 77-year-old father for dialysis at Parirenyatwa Hospital.

At times, they have spent an entire day without being helped due to machine breakdowns while the doctors' strike means his father could not be checked for catheter-associated infections, Nzonzo said.

Doctors who are unable to afford private medical care have faced the same plight as patients.

"It means I have to talk to other doctors to help me, to treat me for free," said Hlambelo, the striking doctor. The 26-year-old comes from a poor family and had hoped that becoming a doctor would pull his family out of poverty.

Zimbabwe's health sector is "precarious," several prominent local non-governmental organizations said in a joint statement early this month. They said the government is "responsible and liable for the depressing situation" at state-run hospitals "and any attendant loss of life." Doctors and officials said they don't track such deaths.

Health Minister Obadiah Moyo said the government was working on resuscitating the health sector.

"The challenges are huge but not insurmountable," he said on Tuesday. "Already we have begun buying medicines, protective clothing and other essentials. It will come right." The government has pledged to improve the supply of medicines and other items.

But for some, the government is hardly doing the bare minimum.

"I am being betrayed by the government," Hlambelo said. "It is useless for me to continue working in this environment. It is not helping me, it is not helping my mother and it is not even helping my patients. It is a difficult time for everyone in this country."

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Trump AG pick poised to reclaim old job in a changed capital

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When William Barr was attorney general in the early 1990s, he was outspoken about some of America's biggest problems — violent crime, drug addiction, teenage pregnancy. The "Age of Aquarius," he warned, had given way to crack babies and broken families, misery and squalor.

The rhetoric reflected Barr's deep-seated personal beliefs and was typical talk for a conservative Republican at a time when family values and tough-on-crime stances defined the party.

Now, as President Donald Trump's nominee for attorney general, Barr is poised to return to the same job in a dramatically different Washington.

Republicans just pushed through the biggest criminal justice overhaul in a generation, easing prison sentences. Family-values are seldom discussed while Trump, twice-divorced and accused of affairs and sexual misconduct, sits in the White House. Serving Trump, who faces intensifying investigations from the department Barr would lead, is unlikely to compare with his tenure under President George H.W. Bush.

Trump demands loyalty, breaking with the practice of shielding law enforcement from political influence. He publicly browbeats Justice Department leadership and ousted his first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, for not protecting him in the Russia investigation. Though the pressures on Barr are bound to be enormous if he is confirmed, allies describe him as driven by his commitment to the department and clear-eyed about what is ahead.

"I have no doubt that he's aware of any unique or unusual challenges that this Justice Department, his Justice Department, will confront," said longtime friend and former colleague Chuck Cooper, who is also Sessions' lawyer. "He approaches these challenges as a public servant who loves his country and who's

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answering the call to service. That's the spirit in which Bill Barr is accepting these challenges."

The first challenge comes Tuesday when Democrats press him at his Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on his broad views of presidential power, including an unsolicited memo he sent the Justice Department last year criticizing special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into whether the president had sought to obstruct the Russia investigation.

Barr is likely to win confirmation and, given his past experience, probably won't face challenges over his qualifications the way other Trump nominees have. Republicans control the Senate and could pick up some support from Democrats eager for the departure of acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker. Democrats wanted Whitaker to step aside from overseeing Mueller's investigation into links between Russia and the Trump campaign, citing Whitaker's criticism of the inquiry before he joined the department.

Barr would inherit that investigation as it reaches critical decisions and as Mueller's most prominent protector inside the department, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, expects to depart.

Though Barr's handling of the investigation is the most pressing issue confronting him, equally important will be stabilizing a department riven by leadership tumult — as well as his own dynamic with Trump.

Though both Trump and Barr are plain-spoken native New Yorkers and generational contemporaries, the two appear to have little in common.

Barr, 68, is a practicing Catholic and longtime creature of Washington — a CIA alumnus who climbed the Justice Department ranks, associated with establishment figures long maligned by Trump and delivered legal reasoning behind some of the most consequential actions of the time, including the invasion of Panama.

Even if Barr doesn't introduce sweeping policy changes, he might nonetheless have to adjust to the shifting winds of the White House or fellow Republicans on Capitol Hill.

The administration, for instance, recently backed legislation reducing mandatory minimum punishments and giving judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders.

Barr will reassure lawmakers that he supports the law, according to a person close to the confirmation process who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations. That's a striking departure from Barr's insistence as attorney general, in the face of homicide rates that dwarf today's totals, that "we are not punitive enough" about violent crime.

Recipients of mandatory minimum sentences richly deserve them, he once said, denouncing as a myth the notion sympathetic and "hapless victims of the criminal-justice system" are languishing in prison longer than they deserve.

Barr's pro-law enforcement stance is so entrenched, one friend said, that as a Columbia University student in the 1960s he brought police coffee as they encountered protesters.

"He's very much a law-and-order guy. He believes the primary responsibility of government is to maintain the security of its citizens," said longtime friend Andrew G. McBride, a former Justice Department colleague.

As attorney general, Barr connected violent crime to a "moral crisis" in society, decrying high rates of divorce and drug addiction, and rising secularism that he said prevented children from discerning right from wrong.

"The prophets of the sexual revolution and the drug culture proclaimed the dawn of a new era of maturity and freedom, of peace and love," he said at a 1992 Chicago event. "That's not what happened — not by a long shot. Today we can see the grim harvest of the Age of Aquarius: Broken families, venereal diseases, teenage pregnancies, crack babies. We see misery and squalor, confusion and loneliness."

In speeches, he repeatedly mocked Woody Allen's justification — "The heart wants what it wants" — for his relationship with partner Mia Farrow's adopted daughter.

Try that rationale, he said, "as a foundation for any sort of human behavior and you will see at once the danger and moral corruption it entails."

The perspective could create an awkward coexistence with a president known for misstatements and embellishments and who, prosecutors say, directed hush money payments to cover up claims of extra-marital relationships with two women.

It's not clear how often he and Trump will interact and under what circumstances. Friends insist he won't

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easily bend to the president's will, describing Barr as principled, smart and strong-willed.

"Bill is not a shrinking violet," said former colleague Timothy Flanigan. "Bill is tough, tough in a good way."

Barr didn't campaign for the job and even proposed other names to the White House instead of his own, one friend. Returning as attorney general to stabilize the department could be a career capstone of sorts.

"He can take this without worrying about career advancement," said C. Boyden Gray, White House counsel to George H.W. Bush. "If he were a lot younger, I'm not sure he would have done it."

AP FACT CHECK: Trump goes wall to wall on the wall

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Never mind the chants, the roars, the repetition. President Donald Trump acknowledged this past week he didn't mean it when he told crowds over and over that Mexico would pay — actually pay — for the wall.

Mexico will pay "indirectly," he now says. To support that claim, he indulged in creative accounting over the course of days marked by a prime-time speech, a trip to the border and a barrage of tweets painting dire threats from the south.

He said the wall will "very quickly pay for itself" by reducing the U.S. drug problem, and pay for itself "many times over" by the benefits he predicts will accrue to the U.S. economy from an updated trade deal with Canada and Mexico.

Neither of these supposed sources of wall payment dings Mexico's treasury or imposes any cost resembling what his campaign proposed. Back then, he wanted Mexico to hand over up to \$10 billion in a single payment or pay equivalent costs through higher tariffs, visa fees charged to its citizens or other punitive measures. Mexico has refused to pay anything toward a U.S. wall.

A look at Trump's wall-to-wall rhetoric on the wall, in a week when thousands of federal workers missed their first paycheck from the partial shutdown and the president weighed the option of declaring a national emergency at the border:

WALL CONSTRUCTION

TRUMP: "The Fake News Media keeps saying we haven't built any NEW WALL. Below is a section just completed on the Border. Anti-climbing feature included. Very high, strong and beautiful! Also, many miles already renovated and in service!" — tweet Friday, showing a section of bollard wall.

THE FACTS: No new miles of barrier construction have been completed under Trump. Existing fencing has been replaced or strengthened in a few areas. It's true that many miles of barrier are in service — about 650 miles or 1,050 kilometers of fencing — but that was done by previous administrations.

MEXICO AND THE WALL

TRUMP: "I never meant they're going to write out a check... . Mexico is paying for the wall indirectly. And when I said Mexico will pay for the wall, in front of thousands and thousands of people, obviously they're not going to write a check." — remarks Thursday.

THE FACTS: A Trump campaign policy paper envisaged an explicit payment from Mexico: "It's an easy decision for Mexico: make a one-time payment of \$5-10 billion," the paper said.

The plan outlined various ways for Trump to compel Mexico to pay for the wall, such as by Washington cutting off billions of dollars in remittances sent back to Mexico by immigrants living in the U.S., or by recouping the money through trade tariffs or higher visa fees. None of that has happened.

Although his campaign left open the possibility that Mexico might somehow contribute to the cost indirectly, Trump roused his crowds with the straight-ahead promise: "I will have Mexico pay for that wall."

"Who?" he asked his supporters. "Mexico," they shouted.

Now he is saying his words were not meant to be taken literally.

TRUMP: "They're paying for the wall in a great trade deal." — remarks Thursday in Texas.

THE FACTS: Nothing in his trade agreement with Mexico and Canada would cover or refund the construc-

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tion cost or require a payment from Mexico. Instead he is assuming a wide variety of economic benefits will come from the agreement that can't be quantified or counted on. For example, he has said the deal will dissuade some U.S. companies from moving operations to Mexico and he credits that possibility as a payment by Mexico.

The trade deal preserves the existing liberalized environment of low or no tariffs among the U.S., Mexico and Canada, with certain improvements for each country. The deal has yet to be ratified in any member country and its chances of winning legislative approval are not assured.

OBAMA VIDEO

TRUMP: "President Obama, thank you for your great support — I have been saying this all along!" — tweet Thursday, accompanied by video of Obama speaking as president in 2014.

THE FACTS: Trump's tweet is deceptive, linking to a video clip that shows Obama, as president, discussing "an actual humanitarian crisis on the border" — a surge of tens of thousands of unaccompanied children and youth, mostly from Central America, who tried to cross from Mexico in 2014. Obama's remarks do not support Trump's proposal for a border wall, which the former president has criticized, or endorse the path Trump is considering now: declaring a national emergency that might enable him to circumvent Congress and unilaterally spend money on wall.

Instead, Obama was asking Congress to approve an emergency appropriation to deal with the surge.

CRISIS?

TRUMP: "Tonight I am speaking to you because there is a growing humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border." — address to the nation Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Few would dispute that a humanitarian crisis is unfolding. A sharp increase in the number of families at the border, mostly from Central America, coupled with the Trump administration's hard-line stance is overwhelming border resources, adding to backlogs in the asylum system and leaving migrants in abysmal conditions on the Mexican side.

Trump, however, has been unable to convince Congress that the border poses a national security crisis. He has made a series of statements falsely claiming that terrorists are pouring in from Mexico, that a wall would choke off shipments of illicit drugs and that people who get into the U.S. illegally commit a disproportionate share of violent crime.

The number of border arrests — the leading gauge of how many people are trying to cross illegally — is actually one-quarter of what it was in 2000, dropping from 1.6 million then to 400,000 in 2018.

DEMOCRATS

TRUMP: "Democrats will not fund border security." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: They just won't fund it the way he wants. They have refused his demand for \$5.7 billion to build part of a steel wall across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Democrats passed legislation the day they took control of the House that offered \$1.3 billion for border security, including physical barriers and technology. Senate Democrats have approved similar funding year after year. Many Democrats backed 2006 legislation that has resulted in the construction of about 650 miles (1,050 kilometers) of border barrier. Many also supported failed legislation in 2013 that would have doubled the length of fencing and allowed immigrants living in the country illegally to apply for a provisional legal status if they paid a \$500 fine and had no felony convictions.

DRUGS

TRUMP: "We lose 300 Americans a week, 90% of which comes through the Southern Border. These numbers will be DRASTICALLY REDUCED if we have a Wall!" — tweet Thursday.

TRUMP: "Our southern border is a pipeline for vast quantities of illegal drugs, including meth, heroin, cocaine and fentanyl. Every week, 300 of our citizens are killed by heroin alone, 90 percent of which floods across from our southern border." — remarks Tuesday.

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THE FACTS: What he's trying to say in the tweet Thursday is that a wall would stop most heroin from coming into the country and drastically reduce heroin deaths, which average about 300 per week. But the Drug Enforcement Administration says "only a small percentage" of heroin seized by U.S. authorities comes across on territory between land ports of entry. Most of it is smuggled through official border crossings.

The agency says the same is true of drugs generally. In a 2018 report, it said the most common trafficking technique by transnational criminal organizations is to hide drugs in passenger vehicles or tractor-trailers as they drive into the U.S. through land entry ports, where they are stopped and subject to inspection. They also employ buses, cargo trains and tunnels, the report says, citing other smuggling methods that also would not be choked off by a wall.

Trump recently said drug smugglers don't use ports of entry, an assertion flatly contradicted by his drug enforcement personnel.

Despite that disconnect, Trump went so far as to say: "The border wall would very quickly pay for itself. The cost of illegal drugs exceeds \$500 billion a year, vastly more than the \$5.7 billion we have requested from Congress."

THE EX-PRESIDENTS

TRUMP on a border wall: "This should have been done by all of the presidents that preceded me. And they all know it. Some of them have told me that we should have done it." — Rose Garden news conference Jan. 4.

THE FACTS: Three ex-presidents — Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush — denied discussing the wall with Trump; the fourth, Obama, declined to answer. His office sent past comments by Obama criticizing the wall, and the two have not spoken since the inauguration except for a quick exchange at President George H.W. Bush's funeral. Said Carter: "I have not discussed the border wall with President Trump, and do not support him on the issue."

VIOLENCE

TRUMP: "Over the years thousands of Americans have been brutally killed by those who illegally entered our country and thousands more lives will be lost if we don't act right now." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: His statement that people in the country illegally are a special menace to public safety is at odds with plentiful research.

Multiple studies from social scientists and the libertarian think tank Cato Institute have found that people in the U.S. illegally are less likely to commit crime than U.S. citizens — beyond the crime of illegal entry — and legal immigrants are even less likely to commit crime. A March study by the journal *Criminology* found "undocumented immigration does not increase violence."

IMMIGRANT COSTS/BENEFITS

TRUMP: "America proudly welcomes millions of lawful immigrants who enrich our society and contribute to our nation but all Americans are hurt by uncontrolled illegal migration. It strains public resources and drives down jobs and wages." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: The U.S. is not experiencing "uncontrolled" illegal immigration. The debate is over whether the controls are strong enough.

As for the costs, a major academic study in 2016 by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine found the job impacts of immigration, when measured over at least 10 years, are very small. It found immigration — legal and illegal — is an overall benefit to long-term economic growth.

Some evidence suggests that skilled immigrants boost wages. Native-born Americans without a high-school degree are most likely to suffer.

The academy study said estimating fiscal impacts of immigration is complex. Young and old immigrants tend to drain government resources while working-age immigrants contribute.

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TERRORISM

TRUMP: "We have terrorists coming through the southern border because they find that's probably the easiest place to come through. They drive right in and they make a left." — Rose Garden news conference Jan. 4.

SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS, White House press secretary: "We know that roughly, nearly 4,000 known or suspected terrorists come into our country illegally, and we know that our most vulnerable point of entry is at our southern border." — "Fox News Sunday" Jan. 6.

THE FACTS: If they're driving "right in" through border crossings, no wall would stop them. But as to the broader point, U.S. officials have produced no evidence of a terrorist influx from Mexico.

Trump and some of his aides have misrepresented statistics on foreigners who were stopped globally by Customs and Border Protection because they were on a watch list. They have suggested or plainly stated that they were stopped coming from Mexico.

Sanders acknowledged later in the week: "I should have said 4,000 at all points of entry, not just at the southern border."

Despite Trump's portrayal of Mexico as a teeming portal for terrorists, the State Department issued a report in September finding "no credible evidence indicating that international terrorist groups have established bases in Mexico, worked with Mexican drug cartels or sent operatives via Mexico into the United States."

It went on: "The U.S. southern border remains vulnerable to potential terrorist transit, although terrorist groups likely seek other means of trying to enter the United States."

Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Jill Colvin, Catherine Lucey, Zeke Miller and Kevin Freking in Washington and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

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US starts withdrawing supplies, but not troops, from Syria

By ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military says it has started pulling equipment, but not troops, out of Syria as a first step in meeting President Donald Trump's demand for a complete military withdrawal.

The announcement is fueling concern about how quickly the U.S. will abandon its Kurdish allies, amid contradictory statements recently by Trump administration officials on an exit timetable.

The withdrawal began with shipments of military equipment, U.S. defense officials said. But in coming weeks, the contingent of about 2,000 troops is expected to depart even as the White House says it will keep pressure on the Islamic State group. Once the troops are gone, the U.S. will have ended three years of organizing, arming, advising and providing air cover for Syrian, Kurdish and Arab fighters in an open-ended campaign devised by the Obama administration to deal the IS group a lasting defeat.

"The fact that a couple thousand uniformed personnel in Syria will be withdrawing is a tactical change. It doesn't materially alter our capacity to continue to perform the military actions that we need to perform," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Saturday in the United Arab Emirates.

Uncertainty over the timing and terms of the Syria pullout have raised questions about the Trump administration's broader strategy for fighting Islamic extremism, including Trump's stated intention to reduce U.S. forces in Afghanistan this summer.

U.S. airstrikes against IS in Syria began in September 2014, and ground troops moved in the following year in small numbers.

The U.S. military has a limited network of bases inside Syria. Troops work mostly out of small camps in remote parts of the country's northeast. Also, U.S. troops are among 200 to 300 coalition troops at a garrison in southern Syria known as al-Tanf, where they train and accompany local Syrian opposition forces

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on patrols to counter the IS group. Al-Tanf is on a vital road linking Iranian-backed forces from Tehran all the way to southern Lebanon — and Israel's doorstep.

Trump's decision to leave Syria, which he initially said would be rapid but later slowed down, shocked U.S. allies and angered the Kurds in Syria, who are vulnerable to attack by Turkey. It also prompted the resignation of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and drew criticism in Congress. Sen. Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat, called the decision a "betrayal of our Kurdish partners."

The U.S. military command in Baghdad, which is managing the counter-IS campaign in Iraq and Syria, said Friday that it "has begun the process of our deliberate withdrawal from Syria," adding that, for security reasons, it would not reveal timetables, locations or troop movements. In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman, Navy Cdr. Sean Robertson, said in a statement, "We will confirm that there has been no redeployment of military personnel from Syria to date."

The withdrawal plan, whose details are classified, includes bringing hundreds of additional troops into Syria temporarily to facilitate the pullout. These include troops to provide extra security for those who are preparing to leave. The full withdrawal is expected to take several months.

The USS Kearsarge amphibious assault ship is now in the region and could provide troops and equipment to support the withdrawal.

U.S. troops are still working with a partner known as the Syrian Democratic Forces to stamp out the last IS holdouts in the Middle Euphrates River Valley near the Iraqi border. Trump has asserted that the IS group in Syria is defeated, but others have said a continued U.S. military presence is necessary to prevent a resurgence of the group. Two weeks before Trump announced he was ordering a pullout, Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the U.S. still had a long way to go in training local Syrian forces to stabilize areas ridden of the IS group. He said it would take 35,000 to 40,000 local forces in northeastern Syria to maintain security, but only about 20 percent had been trained.

Another complication is the fate of hundreds of foreign IS fighters being held in Syria. The U.S. doesn't want these prisoners to be released once U.S. forces are gone, since they could rejoin the militant cause in Syria or elsewhere.

There has been confusion over plans to implement Trump's pullout order amid threats from Turkey to attack the Kurdish fighters, who are seen by Ankara as terrorists because of their ties to insurgents within Turkey.

On a visit to Turkish troops stationed near the Syrian border Friday, Turkey's defense minister, Hulusi Akar, reiterated that Ankara is "determined" to fight Kurdish militias it considers terrorists and said military preparations were ongoing.

"When the time and place comes, the terrorists here will also be buried in the ditches and trenches they have dug," he said.

Earlier this week, Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, said American troops will not leave northeastern Syria until the IS group is defeated and American-allied Kurdish fighters are protected, signaling a slowdown in Trump's initial order for a rapid withdrawal.

In Cairo on Thursday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that although Trump has decided to bring troops home, he will keep up the fight against the IS group more broadly.

"Let me be clear: America will not retreat until the terror fight is over," Pompeo said.

The distinctive feature of the U.S. military campaign in Syria is its partnership with the Kurds and Arabs who were willing to act as American proxies by fighting the Islamic State group without U.S. troops having to take the lead combat role. U.S. forces took a similar approach in neighboring Iraq, starting in 2014, but in that case, they had a willing partner in the Iraqi government, whereas in Syria, the U.S. is present without the blessing of President Bashar Assad.

Syria also is complicated by the presence of Russian troops who are, in effect, propping up the Assad government, and by Iranian support for Assad. American and Russian warplanes have shared the skies over Syria, carrying out separate—and in some cases, conflicting—missions against the IS group and other targets.

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The U.S. has about 5,200 troops in Iraq to assist its security forces, and Trump has given no indication he intends to withdraw them any time soon. He has, however, asserted that the U.S. must bring an end to the Mideast wars that began after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. He has questioned the wisdom of continuing the 17-year war in Afghanistan and recently demanded that about half of the 14,000 U.S. troops there be sent home.

Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor and Matthew Lee in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

US says time for new government in Venezuela

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States stepped up its criticism of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro on Saturday with an explicit call for the formation of a new government in the South American country.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement that it stood behind the head of Venezuela's opposition-run congress, Juan Guaido, who said on Friday that he was prepared to step into the presidency temporarily to replace Maduro.

The statement was the latest in a series of Trump administration attacks on Maduro, whose inauguration to a new term as president on Thursday has been widely denounced as illegitimate.

"The people of Venezuela deserve to live in freedom in a democratic society governed by the rule of law," State Department spokesman Robert Palladino said. "It is time to begin the orderly transition to a new government. We support the National Assembly's call for all Venezuelans to work together, peacefully, to restore constitutional government and build a better future."

"The United States government will continue to use the full weight of U.S. economic and diplomatic power to press for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela," he said in the statement, released in Abu Dhabi where Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was visiting as part of a Mideast trip.

Pompeo spoke to Guaido earlier in the week shortly after the 35-year-old was elected to lead the National Assembly.

Pompeo told reporters traveling with him that the events taking place in Venezuela now were "incredibly important."

"The Maduro regime is illegitimate and the United States will continue ... to work diligently to restore a real democracy to that country," he said. "We are very hopeful that we can be force for good to allow the region to come together to deliver that."

Guaido, speaking to a crowd blocking a Caracas street a day after Maduro's inauguration, said he was willing to become interim leader. But he said he would need support from the public, the armed forces and other countries and international groups before trying to form a transitional government to hold new elections to replace Maduro.

The head of the Organization of American States, Secretary-General Luis Almagro, responded quickly, sending out a tweet recognizing Guaido as Venezuela's interim president.

U.S. national security adviser John Bolton then praised Guaido, although Bolton didn't echo Almagro's step of calling him the interim president.

Bolton reaffirmed the U.S. position that the May election that gave Maduro a second term was "not free, fair or credible." Bolton said "we support the courageous decision" of Guaido's declaration "that Maduro does not legitimately hold the country's presidency."

Guaido asked Venezuelans to mass in a nationwide demonstration on Jan. 23, a historically important date for Venezuelans - the day when a mass uprising overthrew dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez in 1958.

The constitution assigns the presidency to the head of the National Assembly if Maduro is illegitimate.

The military generally has remained firmly behind Maduro so far despite some reports of small-scale attempts at revolt.

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A once wealthy oil nation, Venezuela is gripped by a growing crisis of relentless inflation, food shortages and mass migration.

Seventeen Latin American countries, the United States and Canada denounced Maduro's government as illegitimate in a measure adopted Thursday at the OAS in Washington.

With Trump's nominee in limbo, envoy post in UAE stays empty

By RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Friday, no U.S. ambassador was there to welcome him.

The post has been vacant for nine months. The Republican donor President Donald Trump chose for the job, John Rakolta Jr., hasn't been approved by the Senate.

Trump has frequently accused Senate Democrats of using the chamber's complex web of rules to sabotage his nominees. But Rakolta's selection illustrates the challenges of filling a high-level government position with a candidate from the corporate world who has no prior diplomatic experience.

Rakolta, a construction company CEO, contributed \$250,000 to Trump's inaugural committee. His wife and children donated tens of thousands of dollars more to Trump's campaign as well as to other GOP causes. Rakolta is related by marriage to Ronna Romney McDaniel, the chairwoman of the Republican National Committee. Rakolta's wife is McDaniel's aunt.

His nomination moved so slowly in the Senate that it was sent back to the White House earlier this month — one of more than 270 of the president's picks returned because they weren't acted on before the end of that session of Congress. It's not unusual for a White House to re-nominate many of the same people, but the Trump administration hasn't said yet whether it would re-submit Rakolta's name.

Rakolta's qualifications and business background, which includes a dormant partnership with a firm headquartered in Abu Dhabi, the UAE's oil-rich capital, was still being scrutinized by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when the session ended.

At that point nothing that would derail his chances of confirmation had emerged from the review. A Capitol Hill aide familiar with the matter described it as the back and forth that comes with "complex nominee files," a reference to the careful checking required to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The aide wasn't authorized to speak publicly and requested anonymity.

It has long been a presidential tradition to reward generous political donors and campaign supporters with ambassadorships. The political money website Open Secrets found that President Barack Obama named two dozen high-profile Democratic Party donors to diplomatic posts during his first year in office.

Still, Trump upended decades of State Department practice in tapping Rakolta in May. If he's re-nominated and eventually confirmed, Rakolta would become the first political appointee to serve as ambassador to the Emirates, a small yet ambitious nation aiming to expand its regional clout. The job has been filled exclusively by career foreign service officers since 1972, when the United States and the UAE established formal diplomatic relations.

The U.S. ambassador's office has been vacant since late March when Barbara Leaf retired from the State Department after a 33-year diplomatic career. By comparison, Leaf was confirmed as ambassador in November 2014, about four months after she was nominated.

The UAE is host to about 5,000 U.S. troops and Washington's main listening post for Iran is located in Dubai, the largest city in the Emirates. The UAE remains a key defense ally to America. U.S. fighter jets are stationed at Al Dhafra Air Base. Dubai's massive Jebel Ali port is the U.S. Navy's busiest foreign port of call as it can host even aircraft carriers.

Rakolta is chairman and CEO of Walbridge Aldinger, a construction firm headquartered in Detroit. He said he'll resign from the company if his nomination clears the Senate. He's pledged to recuse himself from issues in which he may have a financial interest although he will continue to be a "passive investor" in Walbridge, according to documents filed with the U.S. Office of Government Ethics.

He initially supported Florida GOP Sen. Marco Rubio for president and didn't back Trump until just before

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the Republican National Convention in July 2016. Rakolta was one of many Republicans who grappled with supporting a candidate who seemed to revel in offending women and immigrants. But Rakolta eventually jumped aboard, joining Trump's finance committee in Michigan to help raise money for the campaign.

In addition to giving \$250,000 to Trump's inaugural committee, Rakolta also contributed \$150,000 to the Republican National Committee, according to Federal Election Commission records. He also donated to the campaigns of Rubio, Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, and Rep. Jack Bergman of Michigan.

His wife, son and daughters have contributed more than \$281,000 since 2016 to Trump Victory, a joint fundraising committee for the presidential campaign and other Republican organizations. Rakolta's son, John III, who is an executive at Walbridge, also gave \$15,000 to the Republican National Committee last year and he and his sister Lauren Rakolta each donated \$5,400 directly to Trump's presidential campaign.

Walbridge formed a joint venture with the Abu Dhabi-based Amana Investments and "successfully performed certain construction work together" between 2003 and 2013, according to Jad Aoun, a spokesman for Amana. Although the partnership has not been dissolved, Aoun said the joint venture has "no plans to pursue work."

Terry Merritt, a spokeswoman for Walbridge Aldinger, said last year that the company has no active contracts in the Emirates or elsewhere in the Middle East.

Information on Builtforgood.com, a Walbridge Aldinger web site, described the company's involvement in Masdar City, a government-backed clean energy campus just outside of Abu Dhabi that hosts the International Renewable Energy Agency. Initially estimated in 2006 to be built for \$22 billion, officials later decided to scale back Masdar City amid a drop in crude oil prices and after Dubai's financial crisis in 2009.

Masdar is run by Mubadala, the Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund estimated to have assets of around \$250 billion. Merritt said Walbridge Aldinger has not been involved in the Masdar project since 2011.

All presidential nominees are required to submit a completed questionnaire from the committee, a background investigation conducted by the FBI, and a financial disclosure report certified by the Office of Government Ethics.

Accepting a senior-level government job may require a nominee to sell off assets or agree to recuse themselves from matters that directly involve their financial interests. Several of Trump's prior nominees from the business world eventually bowed out after they deciding that the transition didn't make financial sense for them and their families.

The president's first pick to be Army secretary, billionaire businessman Vincent Viola, withdrew from consideration because of financial entanglements. So did venture capitalist Philip B. Bilden, Trump's initial choice for Navy secretary. Todd Ricketts, a co-owner of the Chicago Cubs, was nominated for deputy Commerce secretary but pulled out after he was unable to resolve conflict-of-interest issues.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai contributed to this report.

Follow Richard Lardner on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/rplardner>

Saudi woman fleeing alleged abuse heads for asylum in Canada

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and ROB GILLIES, Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — An 18-year-old Saudi woman who said she was abused by her family and feared for her life if deported back home left Thailand on Friday night for Canada, which has granted her asylum, officials said.

The fast-moving developments capped an eventful week for Rahaf Mohammed Alqunun. She fled her family while visiting Kuwait and flew to Bangkok, where she barricaded herself in an airport hotel to avoid deportation and grabbed global attention by mounting a social media campaign for asylum.

Her case highlighted the cause of women's rights in Saudi Arabia, where several women fleeing abuse by their families have been caught trying to seek asylum abroad in recent years and returned home. Human rights activists say many similar cases go unreported.

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Alqunun is flying to Toronto via Seoul, South Korea, according to Thai immigration Police Chief Surachate Hakparn. Alqunun tweeted two pictures from her plane seat. One with what appears to be a glass of wine and her passport and another holding her passport while on the plane with the hastag "I did it" and the emojis showing plane, hearts and wine glass.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau confirmed his country had granted her asylum.

"That is something that we are pleased to do because Canada is a country that understands how important it is to stand up for human rights and to stand up for woman's rights around the world and I can confirm that we have accepted the U.N.'s request," Trudeau said.

Several other countries, including Australia, had been in talks with the U.N.'s refugee agency to accept Alqunun, Surachate said earlier in the day.

"She chose Canada. It's her personal decision," he said.

Canada's ambassador had seen her off at the airport, Surachate said, adding that she looked happy and healthy.

She thanked everyone for helping her, he said, and added that the first thing she would do upon arrival in Canada would be to start learning the language. She already speaks more than passable English, in addition to Arabic.

The office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees welcomed Canada's decision.

"The quick actions over the past week of the government of Thailand in providing temporary refuge and facilitating refugee status determination by UNHCR, and of the government of Canada in offering emergency resettlement to Ms. Alqunun and arranging her travel were key to the successful resolution of this case," the agency said in a statement.

It wasn't immediately clear what prompted Alqunun to choose Canada over Australia. Australian media reported that UNHCR had withdrawn its referral for Alqunun to be resettled in Australia because Canberra was taking too long to decide on her asylum.

"When referring cases with specific vulnerabilities who need immediate resettlement, we attach great importance to the speed at which countries consider and process cases," a UNHCR spokesperson in Bangkok told The Associated Press in an email reply on condition of anonymity because the person wasn't authorized to discuss the case publicly.

Australia's Education Minister Dan Tehan said Saturday that Australia had moved quickly to process her case but Canada decided to take her in. He added that, ultimately, the outcome was a good one. "She's going to be safe," he said.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, cited Alqunun's "courage and perseverance."

"This is so much a victory for everyone who cares about respecting and promoting women's rights, valuing the independence of youth to forge their own way, and demanding governments operate in the light and not darkness," he said in a statement.

Alqunun was stopped Jan. 5 at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport by immigration police who denied her entry and seized her passport.

She barricaded herself in an airport hotel room and took her plight onto social media. It got enough public and diplomatic support that Thai officials admitted her temporarily under the protection of U.N. officials, who granted her refugee status Wednesday.

Alqunun's father arrived in Bangkok on Tuesday, but his daughter refused to meet with him. Surachate said the father — whose name has not been released — denied physically abusing Alqunun or trying to force her into an arranged marriage, which were among the reasons she gave for her flight. He said Alqunun's father wanted his daughter back but respected her decision.

"He has 10 children. He said the daughter might feel neglected sometimes," Surachate said.

Canada's decision to grant her asylum could further upset the country's relations with Saudi Arabia.

In August, Saudi Arabia expelled Canada's ambassador to the kingdom and withdrew its own ambassador after Canada's Foreign Ministry tweeted support for women's right activists who had been arrested. The Saudis also sold Canadian investments and ordered their citizens studying in Canada to leave.

No country, including the U.S., spoke out publicly in support of Canada in that spat with the Saudis.

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On Friday, Trudeau avoided answering a question about what the case would mean for relations with the kingdom, but he said Canada will always unequivocally stand up for human rights and women's rights around the world.

Canadian officials were reluctant to comment further until she landed safely in Canada.

Alqunun had previously said on Twitter that she wanted to seek refuge in Australia.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne met Thursday with senior Thai officials in Bangkok. She later said Australia was assessing Alqunun's resettlement request.

Payne said she also raised Australia's concerns with Thai officials about Hakeem al-Araibi, a 25-year-old former member of Bahrain's national soccer team who was granted refugee status in Australia in 2017 after fleeing his homeland, where he said he was persecuted and tortured.

He was arrested while vacationing in Thailand in November due to an Interpol notice in which Bahrain sought his custody after he was sentenced in absentia in 2014 to 10 years in prison for allegedly vandalizing a police station — a charge he denies. Bahrain is seeking his extradition.

Al-Araibi's case is being considered by Thailand's justice system, she said.

Gillies reported from Toronto. Associated Press video journalist Samuel McNeil in Sydney contributed to this report.

NBC News, Megyn Kelly reach separation agreement

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — NBC News announced its professional divorce agreement with Megyn Kelly late Friday, ending an association with the former Fox News Channel star whose attempt to become a network morning television star as part of the "Today" show floundered.

Terms were not disclosed. Kelly was in the second of a three-year contract that reportedly paid her more than \$20 million a year.

She's been off the air since October after creating a furor by suggesting that it was OK for white people to wear blackface on Halloween, and exit negotiations had dragged for two months over the holidays. Even before the controversial commentary, her future was considered limited at NBC News.

"The parties have resolved their differences, and Megyn Kelly is no longer an employee of NBC," the network said in a statement Friday night.

NBC says she'll be replaced in the third hour of the "Today" show by anchors Craig Melvin, Al Roker, Dylan Dreyer and Sheinelle Jones.

Her tenure was also a failure for NBC News Chairman Andrew Lack, who lured her from Fox News Channel with the type of big-money contract that was once standard in television news but now is less so with financial constrictions and less viewership. In a sense, Kelly was caught in a no-woman's land: some at NBC were suspicious of her because of the Fox News background, while her former audience at Fox resented her for tough questioning of Donald Trump on the presidential campaign trail.

While at Fox, her accusations of unwanted sexual advances by the network's late chief executive, Roger Ailes, helped lead to his firing.

She made news at NBC when interviewing women who accused Trump of inappropriate behavior and s poke with accusers of Harvey Weinstein, Bill O'Reilly, Roy Moore and others, as well as women who say they were harassed on Capitol Hill. The episode with Trump accusers had more than 2.9 million viewers, one of her biggest audiences on the network.

Time magazine, which honored "The Silence Breakers" as its Person of the Year in 2017, cited Kelly as the group's leader in the entertainment field.

But tough segments on accusations against former NBC anchor Matt Lauer didn't win her friends internally, as did her public call for Lack to appoint outside investigators to look into why the network didn't air Ronan Farrow's stories about Harvey Weinstein and allowed Farrow to take his story to The New Yorker.

When those stories began to fade, Kelly had trouble attracting an audience in the soft-focus world of morning television. She also briefly hosted an evening newsmagazine that didn't catch on with viewers.

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Kelly made a tearful apology to viewers following her blackface comments, but it proved to be her last appearance on NBC News.

"What is racist?" she said on the show. "Truly, you do get in trouble if you are a white person who puts on blackface on Halloween or a black person who puts on whiteface for Halloween. Back when I was a kid, that was OK, as long as you were dressing up as a character."

Critics accused her of ignoring the ugly history of minstrel shows and movies in which whites applied blackface to mock blacks.

It's not immediately clear what's next for Kelly. NBC would not comment Friday on whether the separation agreement allows her to write about her experiences at the network.

There's no non-compete clause, meaning Kelly is free to seek other television work if she wants to.

AP Writer Mark Kennedy in New York contributed to this report.

Requests to bring in child brides OK'd; legal under US laws

By COLLEEN LONG, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of requests by men to bring in child and adolescent brides to live in the United States were approved over the past decade, according to government data obtained by The Associated Press. In one case, a 49-year-old man applied for admission for a 15-year-old girl.

The approvals are legal: The Immigration and Nationality Act does not set minimum age requirements for the person making the request or for that person's spouse or fiancée. By contrast, to bring in a parent from overseas, a petitioner has to be at least 21 years old.

And in weighing petitions, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services goes by whether the marriage is legal in the spouse or fiancée's home country and then whether the marriage would be legal in the state where the petitioner lives.

The data raises questions about whether the immigration system may be enabling forced marriage and about how U.S. laws may be compounding the problem despite efforts to limit child and forced marriage. Marriage between adults and minors is not uncommon in the U.S., and most states allow children to marry with some restrictions.

There were more than 5,000 cases of adults petitioning on behalf of minors and nearly 3,000 examples of minors seeking to bring in older spouses or fiancés, according to the data requested by the Senate Homeland Security Committee in 2017 and compiled into a report. The approval is the first of a two-step visa process, and USCIS said it has taken steps to better flag and vet the petitions.

Some victims of forced marriage say the lure of a U.S. passport combined with lax U.S. marriage laws are partly fueling the petitions.

"My sunshine was snatched from my life," said Naila Amin, a dual citizen born in Pakistan who grew up in New York City.

She was forcibly married at 13 in Pakistan and later applied for papers for her 26-year-old husband to come to the U.S. at the behest of her family. She was forced for a time to live in Pakistan with him, where, she said, she was sexually assaulted and beaten. She came back to the U.S., and he was to follow.

"People die to come to America," she said. "I was a passport to him. They all wanted him here, and that was the way to do it."

Amin, now 29, said she was betrothed when she was just 8 and he was 21. The petition she submitted after her marriage was approved by immigration officials, but he never came to the country, in part because she ran away from home. She said the ordeal cost her a childhood. She was in and out of foster care and group homes, and it took a while to get her life on track.

"I was a child. I want to know: Why weren't any red flags raised? Whoever was processing this application, they don't look at it? They don't think?" Amin asked.

Fraidy Reiss, who campaigns against coerced marriage as head of a group called Unchained at Last, has scores of similar anecdotes: An underage girl was brought to the U.S. as part of an arranged marriage and eventually was dropped at the airport and left there after she miscarried. Another was married at 16

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overseas and was forced to bring an abusive husband.

Reiss said immigration status is often held over their heads as a tool to keep them in line.

There is a two-step process for obtaining U.S. immigration visas and green cards. Petitions are first considered by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or USCIS. If granted, they must be approved by the State Department. Overall, there were 3.5 million petitions received from budget years 2007 through 2017.

Over that period, there were 5,556 approvals for those seeking to bring minor spouses or fiancées, and 2,926 approvals by minors seeking to bring in older spouses, according to the data. Additionally, there were 204 for minors by minors. Petitions can be filed by U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

"It indicates a problem. It indicates a loophole that we need to close," Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, the chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, told the AP.

In nearly all the cases, the girls were the younger person in the relationship. In 149 instances, the adult was older than 40, and in 28 cases the adult was over 50, the committee found. In 2011, immigration officials approved a 14-year-old's petition for a 48-year-old spouse in Jamaica. A petition from a 71-year-old man was approved in 2013 for his 17-year-old wife in Guatemala.

There are no nationwide statistics on child marriage, but data from a few states suggests it is far from rare. State laws generally set 18 as the minimum age for marriage, yet every state allows exceptions. Most states let 16- and 17-year-olds marry if they have parental consent, and several states — including New York, Virginia and Maryland — allow children under 16 to marry with court permission.

Reiss researched data from her home state, New Jersey. She determined that nearly 4,000 minors, mostly girls, were married in the state from 1995 to 2012, including 178 who were under 15.

"This is a problem both domestically and in terms of immigration," she said.

Reiss, who says she was forced into an abusive marriage by her Orthodox Jewish family when she was 19, said that often cases of child marriage via parental consent involve coercion, with a girl forced to marry against her will.

"They are subjected to a lifetime of domestic servitude and rape," she said. "And the government is not only complicit; they're stamping this and saying: Go ahead."

The data was requested in 2017 by Johnson and then-Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill, the committee's top Democrat. Johnson said it took a year to get the information, showing there needs to be a better system to track and vet the petitions.

"Our immigration system may unintentionally shield the abuse of women and children," the senators said in the letter requesting the information.

USCIS didn't know how many of the approvals were granted by the State Department, but overall only about 2.6 percent of spousal or fiance claims are rejected. A State Department representative said the department is committed to protecting the rights of children and combatting forced marriage.

Separately, the data show some 4,749 minor spouses or fiancées received green cards to live in the U.S. over that 10-year period.

The head of USCIS said in a letter to the committee that its request had raised questions and discussion within the agency on what it can do to prevent forced minor marriages.

USCIS created a flagging system when a minor spouse or fiance is detected. After the initial flag, it is sent to a special unit that verifies the age and relationship are correct before the petition is accepted. Another flag requires verification of the birthdate whenever a minor is detected. Officials note an approval doesn't mean the visa is immediately issued.

"USCIS has taken steps to improve data integrity and has implemented a range of solutions that require the verification of a birthdate whenever a minor spouse or fiance is detected," USCIS spokesman Michael Bars said. "Ultimately, it is up to Congress to bring more certainty and legal clarity to this process for both petitioners and USCIS officers."

The country where most requests came from was Mexico, followed by Pakistan, Jordan, the Dominican Republic and Yemen. Middle Eastern nationals had the highest percentage of overall approved petitions.

Wisconsin man arrested in teen's abduction, parents' deaths

By JEFF BAENEN and GRETCHEN EHLKE, Associated Press

BARRON, Wis. (AP) — A 21-year-old man killed a Wisconsin couple in a baffling scheme to kidnap their teenage daughter, then held the girl captive for three months before she narrowly managed to escape and reach safety as he drove around looking for her, authorities said.

Jayne Closs, 13, was skinny, disheveled and wearing shoes too big for her when she approached a stranger and pleaded for help Thursday near the small, isolated north woods town of Gordon, where police said she was being held by Jake Thomas Patterson.

Within minutes, Patterson was pulled over and jailed on kidnapping and homicide charges for what authorities said was his meticulously planned shotgun attack at the girl's home in October.

The news that Jayme was safe set off joy and relief 60 miles (96 kilometers) away in her hometown of Barron, population 3,300, ending an all-out search that gripped the state, with many people fearing the worst the longer she was missing.

"My legs started to shake. It was awesome. The stress, the relief — it was awesome," Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said, describing the moment he learned Jayme had been found.

Jayne told one of the neighbors in Gordon who took her in that she had walked away from a cabin where she had been held captive.

"She said that this person's name was Jake Patterson, 'he killed my parents and took me,'" said another neighbor, Kristin Kasinskas. "She did not talk about why or how. She said she did not know him."

The sheriff said investigators are trying to figure out what happened to Jayme during her captivity and why she was seized, and gave no details on how she escaped except to say Patterson was not home at the time. He said there is no evidence Patterson knew Jayme or her family or had been in contact with her on social media.

"I know all of you are searching for the answer why any of this happened," Fitzgerald said. "Believe me, so are we."

The sheriff said that he did not know if Jayme had been physically abused but that she was hospitalized overnight for observation and released. Investigators were still interviewing her, and she was "doing as well as circumstances allow," he said.

Kasinskas called 911 to report the girl had been found after another neighbor out walking her dog encountered Jayme and brought her to Kasinskas' house. Patterson was apparently out looking for her when he was stopped by a sheriff's deputy based on a description of his vehicle from Jayme, authorities said.

He was scheduled for an initial court appearance Monday. It was not immediately known whether the unemployed Patterson had an attorney.

Jayne's grandfather, Robert Naiberg, said he had been praying for months for the call he received about his granddaughter.

"I thought, 'Good for her she escaped,'" he said.

Jayne disappeared from her home near Barron after someone blasted his way in and shot her parents, James and Denise Closs, on Oct. 15. The sheriff said investigators believe Patterson killed them in order to abduct the girl.

Patterson took such measures as shaving his head beforehand to avoid leaving evidence at the scene, the sheriff said. A shotgun similar to the one used was recovered from the home where Jayme was believed held, according to Fitzgerald.

Property records show that the cabin belonged to Patterson's father at the time of Jayme's disappearance.

Patterson worked for one day in 2016 at the same Jennie-O turkey plant in Barron as Jayme's parents, Jennie-O Turkey Store President Steve Lykken said. Patterson quit, saying he was moving from the area, Lykken said. But the sheriff said it did not appear Patterson interacted with the couple during his brief time there.

He had no criminal record, according to the sheriff. He graduated in 2015 from Northwood High School,

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where he was on the quiz bowl team and was a good student with a "great group of friends," said District Superintendent Jean Serum.

Kasinskas said she taught Patterson science in middle school, but added: "I don't really remember a ton about him."

"He seemed like a quiet kid," she said. "I don't recall anything that would have explained this, by any means."

The woman who first spotted Jayme on Thursday, Jeanne Nutter, said she was walking her dog along a rural road when a girl called out to her, grabbed her and revealed her name.

"She just yelled, 'Please help me! I don't know where I am! I'm lost!'" Nutter, a social worker who spent years working in child protection, told The Associated Press.

Nutter took her to the home of Peter and Kristin Kasinskas. Jayme was quiet, her emotions "pretty flat," Peter Kasinskas said. From what she told them, they believed she was in Gordon, a logging town of about 650 people, for most of the time she was missing.

Over the past few months, detectives pursued thousands of tips, watched dozens of surveillance videos and conducted numerous searches for Jayme, including one that drew 2,000 volunteers but yielded no clues.

"It was only a few months ago that we as a community gathered to pray for Jayme's safe return at Barron High School," Barron County District Attorney Brian Wright said Friday. "God has answered those prayers."

In November, the sheriff said he kept similar cases in the back of his mind as he worked to find Jayme, including the abduction of Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 when she was taken from her Salt Lake City home in 2002. Smart was rescued nine months later after witnesses recognized her abductors on an "America's Most Wanted" episode.

Smart said in a telephone interview that Jayme's story is "why we can never give up hope on any missing child."

For the latest updates on the story: <https://apnews.com/c529a15d30f845c6adf6ccd478df3a5a>

For more stories on Jayme's abduction and her parents' deaths: <https://apnews.com/JaymeCloss>

Associated Press writers Todd Richmond and Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, Brady McCombs in Salt Lake City and Amy Forliti in Gordon also contributed to this report along with AP news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York.

US aviation system is starting to show strains from shutdown

By DAVID KOENIG, AP Airlines Writer

The partial government shutdown is starting to strain the national aviation system, with unpaid security screeners staying home, air-traffic controllers suing the government and safety inspectors off the job.

Miami International Airport is providing the most visible evidence yet that the shutdown is at least making air travel less convenient.

Facing double the usual number of absences among unpaid TSA screeners, the Miami airport will close one of its concourses most of Saturday, Sunday and Monday to make sure TSA can adequately staff the remaining security checkpoints.

Meanwhile, the national union representing air traffic controllers — who are also working without pay during the shutdown, entering its 22nd day Saturday — sued the government, claiming they are illegally being denied pay.

And aviation-safety inspectors are still off the job, deemed not to be essential enough to keep working during the shutdown.

Here is a roundup of recent developments in the partial government shutdown's impact on air travel.

AWOL SCREENERS

The Transportation Security Administration said that 5.1 percent of screeners were absent on Thursday,

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up from 3.3 percent on the same date last year. The TSA has 51,000 transportation-security officers, who have continued to work because they are deemed essential employees.

Screeners represent just 6 percent of government workers who didn't get paychecks Friday because of the shutdown. Airline-industry officials worry that they are particularly likely to stop showing up because their relatively low pay means they could quickly struggle to pay bills without money coming in.

Screeners start around \$24,000 a year, and most earn between \$26,000 and \$35,000, according to TSA.

The agency has very few tools to deal with a severe shortage. It has a team of non-essential employees who are trained to screen air travelers, but that is only a stopgap designed to cover for shortages at one or two airports during a natural disaster.

January is a relatively light travel period, but industry officials worry what will happen if the shutdown lingers and more TSA employees leave for jobs that include a paycheck.

"TSA only has what it has," said Christopher Bidwell, the vice president for security at the trade group Airports Council International-North America, "and although they have advised us that they are continuing to hire and train, we are very concerned about a prolonged government shutdown."

TERMINAL CLOSURE

Miami International, the nation's 25th-busiest airport, plans to close off Concourse G at 1 p.m. for the next three days and shift a dozen flights a day to other terminals.

"Our wait times have been normal and operations have been smooth so far, but the partial closure is being done in an abundance of caution," airport spokesman Greg Chin said Friday.

Other major airports surveyed by The Associated Press said they had no immediate plans to close terminals or take other drastic measures.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

About 10,000 air traffic controllers under the Federal Aviation Administration continue to work without pay. On Friday, their union, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, filed a lawsuit in federal court in Washington and asked for an order that its members get paid.

Union President Paul Rinaldi said there is already a shortage of controllers, and if current controllers decide to retire — about 1,900 are eligible — the government could be forced to restrict air traffic, creating flight delays. There is no indication that is happening yet.

SAFETY INSPECTORS

About 3,300 aviation safety inspectors under the FAA are not working — since 2013, they have not been considered essential employees who must stay on the job during government shutdowns. They oversee and certify inspections done by employees of airlines and aircraft-repair shops.

"Our inspectors are the oversight, they are the regulatory side of the house for the FAA," said Mike Perone, president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists union. Their work is not getting done, he said.

An FAA spokesman said earlier this week that the agency is recalling inspectors and focusing resources on overseeing airline operations. He declined to say how many inspectors are working, but union officials believe it's about 100.

"A hundred out of 3,300 is probably not real good odds," said Stephen Carl, an FAA inspector in Florida. "Please put us back on the job right now. Aviation is not being overseen."

Carl said ongoing investigations have been put on hold by the shutdown.

SECURITY CONCERNS

Jeffrey Price, an aviation-security consultant and a professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver, expects more TSA agents will fail to show up, creating longer lines and creating a potential target for terrorists at airports.

"As the lines slow down and the crowds grow larger, it puts more and more passengers at risk from an attack," Price said. He added, "The screeners who do come to work will be forced to make up the slack,

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which erodes their effectiveness even more.”

TSA officials said despite fewer numbers, screeners aren't getting lax about their work.

“Security standards have NOT and will NOT be compromised,” tweeted TSA spokesman Michael Bilello.

DUMPING TSA

Longer lines would alienate travelers and could push more airports to replace government employees with privately contracted screening agents. Airports in San Francisco and Kansas City already do that, with approval from the Transportation Department.

In 2016 — when TSA was understaffed at many airports, creating lines long enough to make many travelers miss their flights — other airports explored hiring contractors. Most dropped the idea after TSA's performance improved.

HELPING OUT

Some airports are trying to help the unpaid federal employees.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport organized an event with credit unions, utilities and nonprofit organizations that can help federal employees obtain short-term loans and assistance, said spokesman Perry Cooper.

Tampa International Airport is working with different agencies to set up a food pantry, get bus passes and work with utilities to help hundreds of federal employees who may be struggling to pay bills.

Pittsburgh International Airport delivered lunches to TSA workers and air traffic controllers on Friday and plans to do it every Friday until the shutdown ends.

David Koenig can be reached at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

AP Business Writer Cathy Bussewitz in New York contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Jan. 13, the 13th day of 2019. There are 352 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 13, 1982, an Air Florida 737 crashed into Washington, D.C.'s 14th Street Bridge and fell into the Potomac River while trying to take off during a snowstorm, killing a total of 78 people; four passengers and a flight attendant survived.

On this date:

In 1794, President George Washington approved a measure adding two stars and two stripes to the American flag, following the admission of Vermont and Kentucky to the Union. (The number of stripes was later reduced to the original 13.)

In 1915, a magnitude-7 earthquake centered in Avezzano, Italy, claimed some 30,000 lives.

In 1941, a new law went into effect granting Puerto Ricans U.S. birthright citizenship. Novelist and poet James Joyce died in Zurich, Switzerland, less than a month before his 59th birthday.

In 1962, comedian Ernie Kovacs died in a car crash in west Los Angeles 10 days before his 43rd birthday.

In 1964, Roman Catholic Bishop Karol Wojtyla (voy-TEE'-wah) (the future Pope John Paul II) was appointed Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, by Pope Paul VI.

In 1968, country singer Johnny Cash performed and recorded a pair of shows at Folsom State Prison in California; material from the concerts was released as an album by Columbia Records under the title "Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison," which proved a hit.

In 1978, former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey died in Waverly, Minnesota, at age 66.

In 1990, L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the nation's first elected black governor as he took the

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oath of office in Richmond.

In 1992, Japan apologized for forcing tens of thousands of Korean women to serve as sex slaves for its soldiers during World War II, citing newly uncovered documents that showed the Japanese army had had a role in abducting the so-called "comfort women."

In 1997, seven black soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor for World War II valor; the lone survivor of the group, former Lt. Vernon Baker, received his medal from President Bill Clinton at the White House.

In 2000, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates stepped aside as chief executive and promoted company president Steve Ballmer to the position.

In 2012, the Italian luxury liner Costa Concordia ran aground off the Tuscan island of Giglio and flipped onto its side; 32 people were killed.

Ten years ago: President-elect Barack Obama's nominee for secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton, vowed during her Senate confirmation hearing to revitalize the mission of diplomacy in U.S. foreign policy. Obama's choice to run the Treasury Department, Timothy Geithner (GYT'-nur), disclosed that he had failed to pay \$34,000 in taxes from 2001 to 2004. U.S. Marshals apprehended Marcus Schrenker, 38, in North Florida days after the businessman and amateur daredevil pilot apparently tried to fake his own death in a plane crash. (Schrenker was sentenced to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to securities fraud charges, on top of four years in federal prison on charges stemming from the plane crash.) Actor-director Patrick McGoohan died in Los Angeles at age 80. Author Hortense Calisher died in New York at age 97.

Five years ago: A shooting at a Wesley Chapel, Florida, movie theater left Chad Oulson, 43, dead; retired Tampa police captain Curtis Reeves, 71, is accused of killing Oulson during what authorities said was an argument over Oulson's texting just before a showing of the movie "Lone Survivor." (He is still awaiting trial; a judge has rejected a "stand-your-ground" defense.) Two Fullerton, California, police officers who were videotaped in a violent struggle with a homeless man, Kelly Thomas, during an arrest were acquitted by a jury in Santa Ana of killing him.

One year ago: A false alarm that warned of a ballistic missile headed for Hawaii sent the islands into a panic, with people abandoning cars on a highway and preparing to flee their homes; officials apologized and said the alert was sent when someone hit the wrong button during a shift change. Two Army captains who met at West Point, Daniel Hall and Vincent Franchino, returned there to be married, in what The New York Times said was believed to be the first same-sex marriage of active-duty personnel at the military academy.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Frances Sternhagen is 89. TV personality Nick Clooney is 85. Comedian Rip Taylor is 85. Comedian Charlie Brill is 81. Actor Billy Gray is 81. Actor Richard Moll is 76. Rock musician Trevor Rabin is 65. Rhythm-and-blues musician Fred White is 64. Rock musician James Lomenzo (Megadeth) is 60. Actor Kevin Anderson is 59. Actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus is 58. Rock singer Graham "Suggs" McPherson (Madness) is 58. Country singer Trace Adkins is 57. Actress Penelope Ann Miller is 55. Actor Patrick Dempsey is 53. Actress Suzanne Cryer is 52. Actress Traci Bingham is 51. Actor Keith Coogan is 49. TV producer-writer Shonda Rhimes is 49. Actress Nicole Eggert is 47. Actor Ross McCall is 43. Actor Michael Pena is 43. Actor Orlando Bloom is 42. Meteorologist Ginger Zee (TV: "Good Morning America") is 38. Actress Ruth Wilson is 37. Actor Julian Morris is 36. Actor Liam Hemsworth is 29.

Thought for Today: "I am tomorrow, or some future day, what I establish today. I am today what I established yesterday or some previous day." — James Joyce (1882-1941).